TESTS: Honda VT500 Ascot, Husqvarna 500 XC, Maico 490 Sand Spider, Honda XR500R, Suzuki RM125

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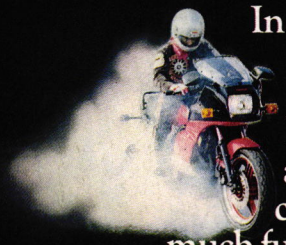

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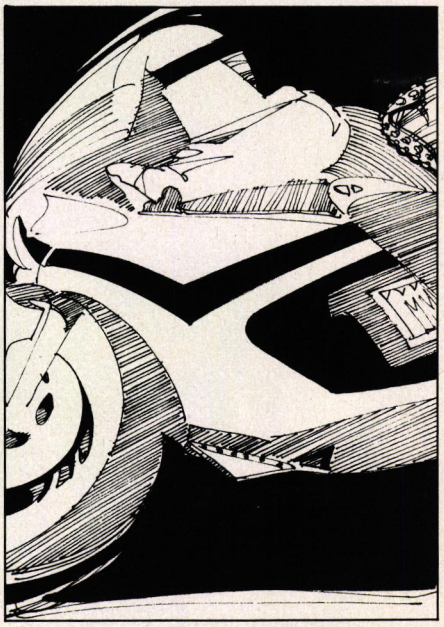

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Contents

VOL. 17 NO. 10 OCTOBER 1983

SPECIAL EDITION: CYCLE GUIDE'S PIPE LINES

61 HEADER TALES *exhaustive exhaust research*
63 EXHAUST SYSTEMS BUYERS' GUIDE *what you won't find at Midas*

DEEDS OF SPEED

16 SPEED WARS *Honda V65 Magna, Kawasaki 750 Turbo, Kawasaki GPz1100, Suzuki GS1100ES and Suzuki 1100 Katana meet in a battle of the bullets*—**by Paul Dean**

TESTS

32 SUZUKI RM125 *no guarantees*—**by Ron Lawson**
34 HONDA VT500 *it's a bikestyle, not a lifestyle*—**by Charles Everitt**
50 DESERT WARFARE *Honda XR500R, Husqvarna 500 XC and Maico 490 Sand Spider matched in the Mojave*—**by Ron Lawson**

PRODUCT EVALUATION

40 GSM SPORT RACK *one for the load*—**by T.J. Rafferty**

GUIDE LINES

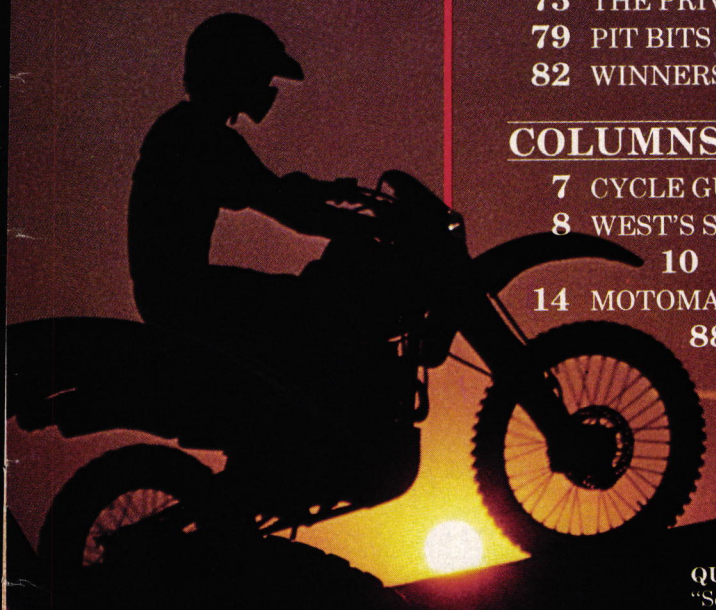
23 COMING SOON *evolution revelation*
30 RIDE/REPORT: *Brooklands 40M*
31 RUMORS *ve haf vee-fours and vee-sixes*

SPORT LINES

73 THE PRIVATEER CONSPIRACY *team No Team*
79 PIT BITS *garage gossip*
82 WINNERS AND LOSERS *Rainey days and Sundays*

COLUMNS & DEPTS

7 CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE *test testimonial*
8 WEST'S SIDE *another fine mess*
10 CONTACT POINTS *breeze-breaking for bucks*
14 MOTOMART *the buy cycle*
88 LETTERS *Bike Of The Year backlash*



QUOTE:
"See, motorcyclists are always arguing about which bike is *the* absolute fastest production motorcycle of them all . . . we simply found out for ourselves."

—Pg. 16

ON THE COVER:
Photographer David Dewhurst looks over Charles Everitt's shoulder as they accelerate into the record books. They're about to learn who makes the world's fastest production motorcycle, but you can beat them to it if you reach page 16 first.

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OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Can-Am Sonic MX-'83	January '83	Motocross	Four-stroke	11.6/12.1	272	28.0/4.24	5
Honda CR125R-'83	April '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.9/12.3	193	27.2/4.13	6
Honda CR250R-'83	February '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.2	217	26.8/4.06	5
Honda CR480R-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	12.0/12.3	226	26.0/3.86	5
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Honda ATC200X-'83	August '83	ATV	Four-stroke	7.2/6.2	285	N/A	5
Husqvarna 250 CR-'83	January '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.7	227	30.0/5.51	6
Husqvarna 430 WR-'83	June '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.4/10.6	246	30.0/5.98	6
Husqvarna 500 CR-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.8	240	30.0/5.51	4
Husqvarna 500 XC-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	11.7/12.8	245	30.0/5.98	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'83	July '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	9.8/11.0	213	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX250-'83	September '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.1	224	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
KTM MC 495-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.4	249	28.0/4.21	4
Maico 490 Sand Spider-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	12.0/12.7	243	27.0/4.72	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki RM125-'83	October '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.7/11.8	200	29.5/4.76	6
Suzuki RM250-'83	February '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.7/12.4	219	29.7/4.84	5
Suzuki RM500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.8	234	29.7/4.84	4
Yamaha YZ250-'83	March '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.3	217	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	227	28.5/4.72	4
Yamaha TT600K-'83	August '83	Trail	Four-stroke	11.7/10.8	280	28.0/4.65	5

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R65 LS-'82	April '82	2C/G	649.6	14.153/92.40	109†	417	35–50	138
BMW R100RT-'82	May '82	2C/G	979.9	13.862/95.13	126†	523	35–50	148
H-D FLH Classic-'82	August '82	45 deg. 2D/F	1338.6	15.467/82.04	101†	752	32–42	180
H-D FXRS-'82	December '81	45 deg. 2D/F	1338.6	13.917/93.07	109†	594	40–47	124
H-D XLS Roadster-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.842/93.94	106	515	43–55	138
H-D XLX-61-'83	June '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.459/95.94	106	488	40–72	128
Honda VF400F-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/F	399.1	13.588/96.35	112	402	34–51	127
Honda CBX400F-'82	October '82	4A/F	399.1	13.588/96.46	110	402	34–58	128
Honda CB1100F-'83	January '83	4A/F	1062.2	11.224/119.84	144†	550	33–46	135
Honda CX650 Custom-'83	May '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.560/102.97	119	454	38–48	124
Honda CX650 Turbo-'83	March '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.093/111.66	137†	538	25–44	124
Honda FT500 Ascot-'82	August '82	1 B/F	497.7	14.915/83.72	97†	360	47–54	146
Honda GL1100A Aspencade-'83	February '83	4C/G	1085.0	13.515/96.05	152†	752	32–46	131
Honda GL1100I Interstate-'82	April '82	4C/G	1085.0	13.309/99.55	139†	697	40–50	N/A
Honda Nighthawk 550-'83	July '83	4A/G	572.3	12.461/102.97	114	429	37–49	125
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	December '83	4A/G	656.0	12.287/108.04	122	451	29–51	127
Honda Nighthawk 750-'82	March '82	4A/F	748.7	12.741/103.80	131†	543	36–49	128
Honda V45 Interceptor-'83	May '83	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.963/111.66	138	511	31–40	116
Honda V45 Magna-'82	June '82	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.344/105.88	129	507	30–46	124
Honda V45 Sabre-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.179/111.11	128	514	33–46	130
Honda VT500 Ascot-'83	October '83	52 deg. 2D/G	490.9	13.628/93.75	112	411	41–61	129
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/G	749.6	12.906/100.78	127	484	48–55	132
Kawasaki GPz550-'83	June '83	4A/F	553.8	12.647/102.97	132†	438	42–62	144
Kawasaki GPz750-'83	February '83	4A/F	739.0	12.167/109.22	134†	498	35–51	136
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	July '83	4A/F	739.0	11.225/123.53	146	514	N/A	N/A
Kawasaki GPz1100-'82	May '82	4A/F	1089.8	11.328/119.36	137†	534	35–48	127
Kawasaki KZ550 Spectre-'83	May '83	4A/G	553.8	13.348/96.77	116†	441	44–56	137
Kawasaki KZ750-L3-'83	January '83	4A/F	739.0	12.095/108.95	134†	487	47–53	132
Kawasaki KZ750 LTD-'82	December '82	4A/F	739.0	12.564/105.38	131†	474	41–55	131
Kawasaki KZ1000R-'82	November '82	4A/F	998.6	11.849/116.73	134†	505	35–49	129
Kawasaki KZ1100 Spectre-'82	March '82	4A/G	1089.8	11.960/110.42	142†	553	30–44	132
Suzuki GS450E-'83	January '83	2A/F	448.2	14.236/93.16	106†	384	39–49	131
Suzuki GS450G Automatic-'83	February '83	2A/G	448.2	16.412/82.34	94†	410	36–59	143
Suzuki GS550E-'83	June '83	4A/F	572.3	12.593/104.04	120	443	39–47	135
Suzuki GS750E-'83	August '83	4A/F	747.4	11.893/112.92	131†	485	35–50	135
Suzuki GS1100E-'82	May '82	4A/F	1074.9	11.203/119.30	141†	530	37–49	132
Suzuki GS1100G-'82	September '82	4A/G	1074.9	11.919/114.21	137†	555	42–48	138
Suzuki GS1100GK-'82	October '82	4A/G	1074.9	12.579/104.52	137†	647	31–44	155
Suzuki XN85 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/F	673.9	12.381/107.14	132†	521	34–46	120
Yamaha XS400 Seca-'82	December '82	2A/F	399.4	14.589/89.28	110†	382	47–57	140
Yamaha XZ550R Vision-'83	October '83	70 deg. 2D/G	552.9	13.422/95.23	112	483	39–47	124
Yamaha XJ650 Seca-'82	September '82	4A/G	653.4	12.830/103.44	125†	469	44–59	135
Yamaha XJ650 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/G	653.4	13.059/103.32	126†	543	35–53	126
Yamaha XS400 Maxim-'82	November '82	2A/F	399.4	14.651/88.06	104†	376	52–61	136
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	April '83	75 deg. 2D/G	920.0	12.835/101.46	108	503	38–45	138
Yamaha XJ900 Seca-'83	September '83	4A/G	853.2	11.949/113.20	128	499	34–58	135

***A**-Transverse Vertical, **B**-Vertical (single-cylinder only), **C**-Horizontally Opposed, **D**-Tandem Vee, **E**-Transverse Vee, **F**-Chain Final Drive, **G**-Shaft Final Drive, **H**-Belt Final Drive

† indicates a calculated top speed

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West's Side

The Laurel & Hardy Riding Academy

Well, here's another nice ride you've gotten us into, Ollie. . . .

• We were standing around stretching our sores in Tietjens' garage. We'd been on the road four days already; we had made it here to Great Falls, Montana, but we still had *at least* a month to go. Our destination was Anchorage, via the Alaska Highway, and having ridden through the gut of the Nevada desert in mid-July, across the Wasatch Range and up through West Yellowstone, now we figured we were almost road-tough.

And after four days in the saddle of my BMW R80 G/S, I had tried just about every variant in bun-hanging that this odd, big dual-purpose motha could offer. Of all the various Kama-Sutran positions I'd found, however, one seemed far and away the most comfortable. That was to ride bent far forward, with my feet on the buddy pegs. Compared with the G/S's decidedly agricultural "normal" position (think of driving a Ford tractor from here to Lima, Peru), to lie semi-stretched out on the saddle like a 1949 Packard hood ornament felt almost sexy. Shifting and hitting the rear brake from that position required, of course, some *rill nass* choreography. But then, I hadn't shifted since Salt Lake City, and by now any need to brake would have been a welcome change—this endless Superslabbing was like watching soap operas for a living.

So standing here in Tietjens' garage talking to Thompson, I was confident he'd give me the right answer to my question. He was taking pictures of the G/S for our story and I had asked him if riding with my feet on the rear pegs "looked stupid." Surely he recognized that on this mega-ride anything as fascinating as a comfortable seating position was my most valued possession.

But he only gave me a grin and a firm nod. "Yep. Sure does."

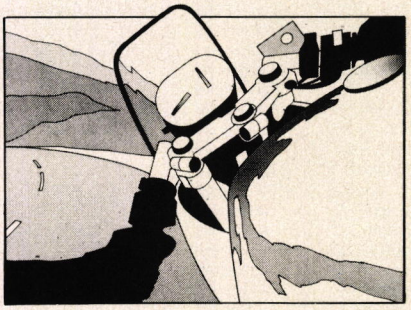
"Oh, well, you mean . . ." I began immediately, prepared to bargain. But no, he cut me off.

"Stupid, Ted—real stupid."

Now, I should tell you that after a few decades of living I've learned one thing—there are certain impulses that it's best not to act upon. So I did *not* walk over and hit him in the shins with the ball-peen hammer. This was wise.

And yet, and yet. . . .

See, it brings up the whole messy business of what's cool on a bike and what's not. There can be no question that



Thompson was correct. Riding a dual-purpose bike with your feet on the rear pegs *does* look stupid. I know it because on long trips I ride my XT500 that way all the time, and every time I pass a storefront window and check myself out, it's always the same. Real stupid.

Furthermore, I'm the first to admit that doing things on a bike that look stupid is somehow *fiercely* unacceptable. That's because riding, beyond being a carefully developed skill, is an exercise in grace, as well. We all want to believe we're pretty clean about it, and when we see someone on a bike doing something that looks stupid, it *really matters.*

Such as, for example, waiting for a red light to turn green, then releasing the clutch and having the front wheel twitch and wobble and snake all over the place like the south end of a northbound go-go dancer until you've gotten up enough speed to stay in one lane at a time.

Such as, for example, continuing to the next red light, greasing down to a halt, placing your left foot a little behind the center of gravity of the bike and struggling desperately to keep the bike upright like Laurel & Hardy moving a piano down a bannister . . . ooh, ohhh-wooah, uups, I've got it, Ollie, I've wooaah. . . .

Such as, for example, getting the bike upright and stabilized finally, leaned to your left, until it's time to lean it to the right so your left foot can shift from neutral to first, then placing your right boot spang in the middle of a pool of ATF and, whoaaaah, Ollie, I don't think I've . . . whoah, there, I—laying that dude down right there in the middle of Pratfall Boulevard as if to have a long look at its oil drain plug . . . um, been leakin' a bit lately, er. . . .

Stupid. Real stupid.

But it gets worse than that, you know it does. Even if it's been a week or two since you laid your bike on its side at a traffic light (and you can therefore justifiably claim that it's been *years*), how about engaging the clutch when the light goes green and riding along for the first hundred yards with your feet sticking down like a pair of duck's feet. *Coool.*

Or trying to come to an extra-smooth halt for the next light, but leaving it just a hair too late so that at the last instant you have to squeeze the brake *hard.* The front fork goes *goooosh*, rebounds back strongly, and those duck's feet come out again like a mallard trying to make a soft landing on a frozen lake . . . except this time *both* boots find patches of ATF and, oh, Ollie, nooo! nooo! Ollie, I don't think I've . . . *damn*!

Stooopid.

Then there's the guy—not you, certainly—who rides along for fifty minutes with his flasher signaling a right turn. And then turns left.

Or the guy who leaves his choke on all morning, riding around in his very own black cloud as if bringing a little bit of Newark with him everywhere he goes.

And of course we have the guy with the dead battery who's cranking his bike for a half hour in the cold with his kill-button switched off. And his good friend—who doesn't trust electric-starting because batteries can fail—who can be heard for blocks around yelling Anglo-Saxon words concerned with procreation because he's been kicking his bike over in 100 degree heat for the same half hour . . . with the same kill-button switched off. If he's any kind of athlete, he'll launch his helmet well beyond the direct line of sight. Occasionally, he won't be able to find it afterwards—but there's no need, the bike never started anyway. Next thing you know, they'll be saying you have to remember to turn the fuel petcock on before it'll start—there's *so* much to learn!

Well, I'm gratified to know that you've escaped any of this gracelessness. It's fine to know there are riders who never put a foot wrong, roads with no ATF, bikes without duck's feet. However, my particular bike, terrain and riding come replete with them all. And when I glance into the plate-glass windows as I pass and I see how stupid I look with my feet on the rear pegs, it's such a relief to know I don't have to look that stupid *all* the time. . . . —*Ted West*

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Contact Points

Eco-Racing

Where do we go from here?

• The Arco station resembled a staging area for the Gyro Gearloose Olympics. Fanatical-looking men tinkered feverishly with bizarre vehicles, most of which looked like leftovers from the "Star Wars" prop department. A family sedan pulled cautiously up to the pumps, its occupants peering warily at the odd devices and rushed activity. The driver asked the attendant, "Say, uh, what's going on here?"

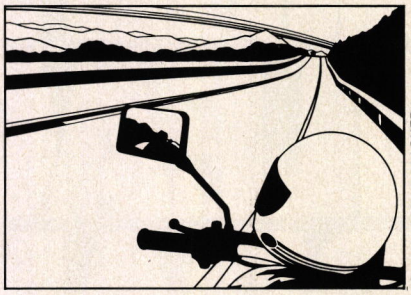
The scene was Carmel, California, and going on was the third annual Craig Vetter National Fuel Economy Run. (For the results, see Sport Lines.) Underlying this event is some interesting moto-history, and several intriguing possibilities have arisen from its growing popularity. First the history:

Craig Vetter, perhaps better known as Mr. Windjammer, sold his fairing company some five years ago. Free of corporate constrictions, and with more than enough in the bank, he undertook a few new projects: the Mystery Ship, a limited edition, highbuck café racer (a failure); and a lightweight-wheelchair design (a moderate success). Concurrently, Vetter continued to push his abiding conviction in the importance to motorcycling of aerodynamics and energy conservation—hardly a field known for commercial potential.

Thus, the economy run gives Vetter a way to publicize the potential of two-wheeler streamlining. The run also insures Vetter's credibility as a designer.

It's at this point he runs smack up against what I call the YBSW ("Yeah, But So What?") factor. This is a conditioned response to configurations that don't resemble traditional motorcycles. Their queer, wind-cheating shapes inevitably evoke the reaction: "Yeah, But So What? Those things are just built to win contests. You couldn't ride one on the highway. And even if you could, who would want to?"

Not all that long ago, many folks were saying much the same things about Japanese motorcycles. And had anyone told me, even so recently as 10 years back, that I'd come to appreciate fairings, fuel gauges and electric starters, I would have replied with an indignant pish-tosh and hah-fooey. Likewise, the YBSW response owes more to custom than to any informed sense of physics, or even economics. The tradition is style over efficiency; form over function.



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But it's not an either/or situation. The notion that speed and efficiency are mutually exclusive ignores the physical realities of moving objects through air. And that notion attaches easily to motorcycles because efficiency played no part in their original design. Motorcycles began as bicycles with an engine between the wheels and a rider on top. One hundred years later that's more or less what they remain—highly refined, to be sure, but still motorized bicycles.

Most of that refinement, for the past 20 years, has issued in component fashion from Japan. By stages, the manufacturers attended to horsepower, electrics, horsepower, reliability, horsepower, brakes, horsepower and suspension. Streamlining wasn't on the list, largely because there was so much room for improvement in all the other categories. But, in a sense, the Japanese approach was merely a techno-extension of an old Irish folk tradition: Why use brains when muscle will do the job?

Aerodynamic development passed through a brief period of experimentation in European roadracing in the Fifties. The bikes got so fast, so quickly, that brakes, tires, shocks and most of the riders were suddenly obsolete. Scary. As a result, streamlining was officially discouraged and the emphasis returned to horsepower. Engines got wider, bikes lower, and before long, riders had to corner with their butts on the footpeg and their knees dragging the pavement.

I submit that the muscle approach has quite nearly played itself out. The horsepower hunt has reached the upper limits of sensibility, not to mention economic feasibility. And the development of more-efficient travel doesn't necessarily depend on the availability of fossil fuels. Even disregarding the fact that the planet's supply of oil is drying up, the traveler who spends less on fuel will have more money to spend on other things—luxuries like housing and food.

Is motorcycling's aerodynamic age almost at hand? Is Vetter's mileage contest an accurate preview of coming attractions? Hell, I don't know. I do know that it still suffers from the YBSW stigma. Despite Vetter's insistence on vehicles capable of meeting the real demands of highway travel, some of the entries would have had a DMV inspector either gasping in disbelief or doubled up with laughter.

To secure the connection between the contest and the advent of commercial streamling, Vetter will likely have to tighten the rules. Maybe it will take a displacement minimum; 185cc, or even 250. Development will likely center on medium-displacement engines, able to propel two people and their gear through the countryside. The need for tiny, small-bore bullets on the city streets is more than a little questionable. Other issues such as rider access, reasonable turning radius and strong acceleration also deserve attention.

Some folks are sure to resist the streamling trend, insisting that God meant motorcycles to be fun, not efficient. But that's just another artificial dichotomy. There are people who, according to their whims, can choose between a Ferrari and a Stutz Bearcat. Before long, motorcyclists will be able to make the same sort of selection. Granted, right now you can choose some form of streamlining in top-of-the-line sportbikes and tourers, but despite those fairings and cowlings, the manufacturers have, so far, concentrated their aerodynamic efforts on rider protection, not on improved efficiency. *Not* on the brainy approach to performance.

The underlying question that Vetter, among others, seeks to answer is, does the market for streamlined motorcycles exist? The economy run is both market research and promotion—a look at the next possible phase in the relatively slow evolution of two-wheeled travel. If the conditions are indeed changing, and the reasons, real or imagined, for *not* enhancing moto-efficiency are disintegrating, then the 1984 mileage-contest is sure to display some tangible prototypes.

Streamliner kits? In dealer's showrooms for 1985? Why not?—*T.J. Rafferty*

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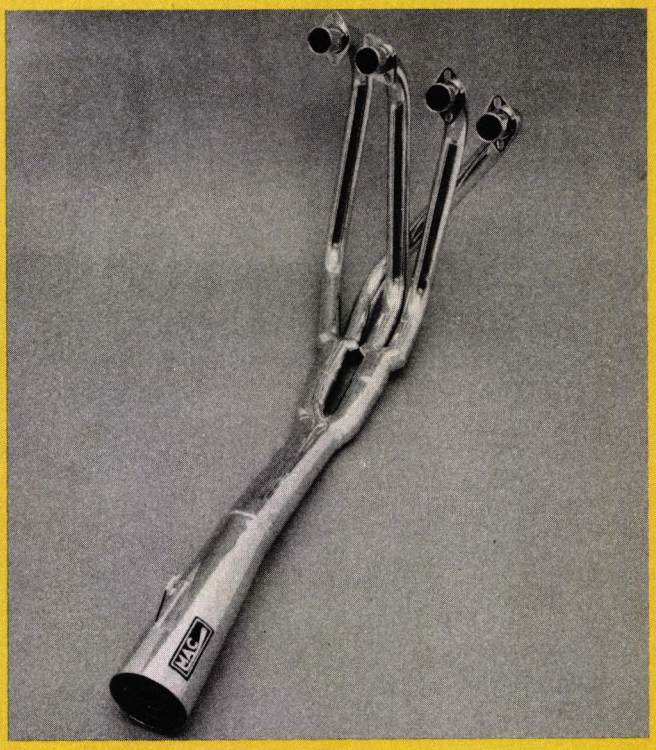

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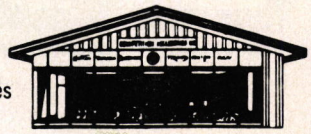

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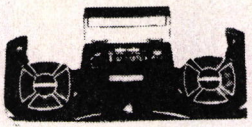

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Motomart

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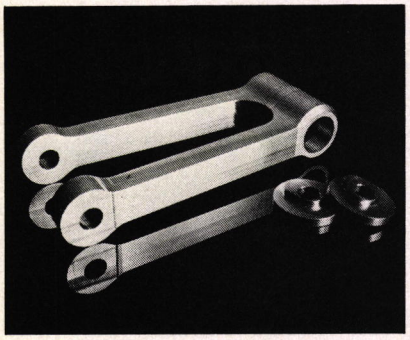
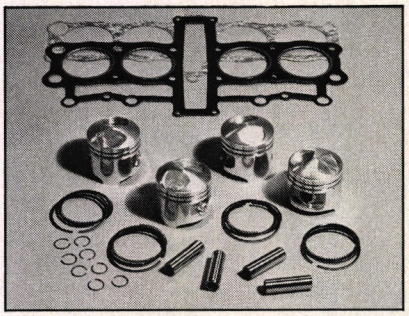
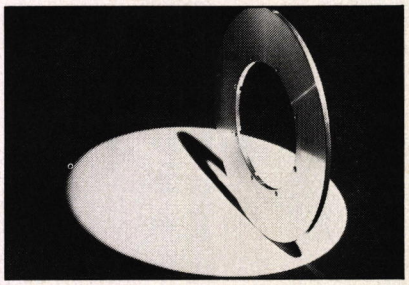


Missing Link: Well, a different one at least. S.W. Simons has a replacement link for the rear suspension on the 1983 CR 125, 250 and 480 Hondas. The link changes the leverage ratio of the stock Honda Pro-Link suspension, to give a more progressive action over the entire suspension travel. Simons claims the link provides improved handling and more-predictable steering. Retail price for the link kit is $99.00. The kit is available from Simons dealers, or directly from S.W. Simons. For more information, write S.W. Simons Inc., Dept. CG, 2625 Miller Ave., Mountain View, California 94040.

Bimota Rim Protectors: Rocks and paving irregularities can play havoc with your bike's wheels, so protect them with the latest tires from Michelin. These superwide tires are V-rated (for sustained speeds of 150 mph) and are standard equipment on Bimotas. Two sizes are available: The A48 front is a 120/80V16, and the M48 rear is a 150/80V16. These tires originally were developed for Bimota, but are suitable for other high-speed applications. Retail price for the front is $78.50; price for the rear is $103.00. For further information contact Cosmopolitan Motors, Dept. CG, 301 Jacksonville Road, Hatboro, Pennsylvania 19040.

For the Seca Speed: Someday we'll stop using that pun, but with Champion Moriwaki's big-bore kit we couldn't resist. This new kit increases the displacement of the Yamaha Seca 550 to 586cc, through the use of 60mm pistons. Each two-ring piston is pressure-cast for strength and uses an L-shaped top ring that Moriwaki claims gives superior sealing. The kit comes complete with rings, pins, clips and head and base gaskets. Recommended retail price is $275.00. The big-bore kit is available from Moriwaki dealers or directly from Champion Moriwaki USA, Dept. CG, 1980 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, California 92627.

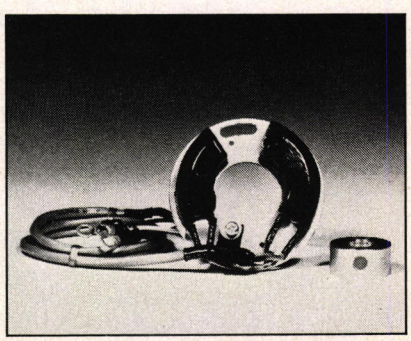




Better Than A BLT: Sandwiches usually aren't the hot tip for brakes, but Buell Brakes has a line of aluminum/stainless-steel brake discs that might change that. The Buell discs have an aluminum center sandwiched between two stainless-steel brake surfaces. The discs are recommended for use with organic brake pads, and are claimed to offer the same fade-resistance of cast-iron discs and metallic pads, but with better heat-dissipation and substantially lighter weight. Replacement discs for most European and Japanese motorcycles have a suggested retail price of $98.00 per disc. For more information write Buell Brakes, Dept. CG, 3320 N. Humbolt Blvd., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212.

Don't Wrap It; Bag It: It won't keep sandwiches fresh, but the Plexibag should keep your Plexifairing safe when it's not in use. The Plexibag is designed for the Plexifairing 3 and Plexistar 2 clear fairings. The bag is made of 200-denier nylon, and features a small inside pouch for storing the fairing's fasteners. A drawstring closure provides complete coverage and the nylon strap allows the bag to be hung in out-of-the-way nooks or crannies. The Plexibag retails for a recommended price of $25.95. For more information on the Plexibag, contact National Cycle Inc., Dept. CG, 2200 Maywood Drive, P.O. Box 158, Maywood, Illinois 60153-0158.

Sparkling Duck: It might not be champagne, but for Ducati owners it's even better. KV Products has announced a new Hall-Effect ignition for 1972–74 Ducati 750 vee-twins that eliminates the stock points and condensor. The Dyna-S unit is self-contained and fits completely within the distributor housing. KV Products claims the ignition gives quicker starts and more-consistent sparks than the stock ignition, and that the ignition is unaffected by oil, dirt or moisture. The Dyna-S carries a three-year warranty and retails for $114.50. The ignition is available from KV Products, Dept. CG, 1060 East Cypress St., Covina, California 91724.



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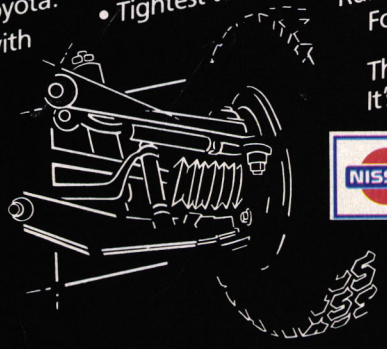
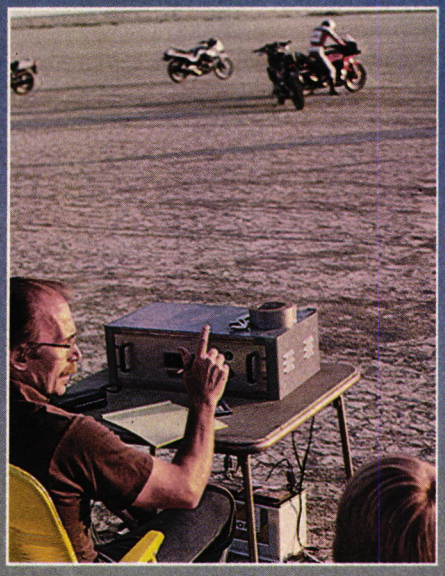
- Adjustable torsion bars allow wheels to step over rough spots smoothly, independently; compression rods face rear for extra-wide clearance of obstacles.
- Highest minimum ground clearance of any compact truck.
- Tightest turning circle for maneuvering in tight spots. Runs rings inside Chevy S-10, Ford Ranger, Toyota.



The new Nissan 4 x 4.
It's one heck-of-a-hunk-of-a truck!

NISSAN NISSAN



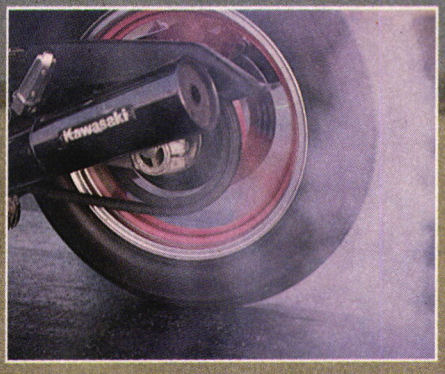
THE POWER ELITE:

Speed Wars

What is the fastest production motorcycle in the world, you ask? Five bikes, 600 horsepower and 55 seconds later, we found the answer.

- Honda V65 Magna
- Kawasaki 750 Turbo
- Kawasaki GPz1100
- Suzuki GS1100ES
- Suzuki 1100 Katana

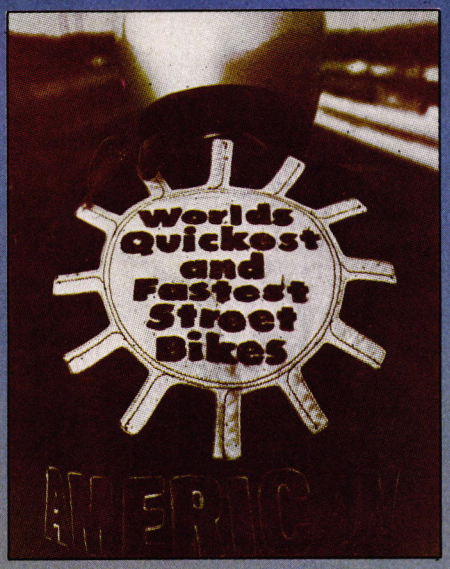
BY PAUL DEAN



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

For the next few minutes, we're all going to become speed junkies. We're going to deal in raw, uncut horsepower, power with the highest possible street value, power in doses large enough to make even a simple ride down to the Golden Arches seem every bit as thrilling as a Pro Stock record run. We're going to deal in *speed*.

That preoccupation with mass quantities of horsepower has a specific purpose: It helps us explain how we settled a controversy that has raged ever since man first discovered the joys of riding on two wheels. See, motorcyclists are always arguing about which bike is *the* absolute fastest production motorcycle of them all; and rather than add to the speculation, we simply found out for ourselves.



We rounded up all the contenders and let them slug it out in a wheel-to-wheel contest of pure speed. And by the time the smoke cleared and the smell of burnt rubber was no longer in the air, one bike stood alone as The King of Speed, the fastest production motorcycle roaming the face of the earth. Bar none.

Our competition began with five contenders that had been selected through a careful process of elimination. We considered every production bike's performance potential, either alleged or actual, and one by one, tossed out all of the models that didn't stand a chance of winning. Eventually, we narrowed the field down to five finalists representing just three brands—but they were the five meanest, nastiest streetbikes in existence.

Continued

The long-running controversy over which production bike is the fastest has finally been laid to rest.

Heading the list was Honda's V65 Magna, the tire-smoking star of those prime-time TV commercials billing the 1100cc vee-four as the world's fastest motorcycle. But that claim had been made before Kawasaki introduced its fearsomely fast 750 Turbo, another obvious candidate for the title. We also included Kawasaki's GPz1100 in the competition, since it had been given enough additional horsepower for '83 to stand a chance of scoring an upset win. But the real underdogs were the two remaining finalists, both of which carry Suzuki's colors—the half-faired GS1100ES and the mini-faired 1100 Katana. By virtue of their sport-oriented streamlining, more than on the strength of their horsepower output, we thought both were legitimate contenders. But barely. Because based on past performances, it seemed unlikely that either would be quite able to muster the kind of top speed or quarter-mile time it would take to win.

Ah, but that mention of top speed and elapsed times points out a confusion that surrounds the word "fastest" when it is used as a reference of performance. In the literal sense of the word, the fastest bike is the one with the highest top speed, whereas the one that posts the lowest elapsed time through the quarter-mile is the *quickest* bike. And there were no guarantees that one of our five bikes would come out on top in both categories. We had no choice, then, but to prepare for the possibility that we might have *two* winners: the King of the Quarter-Mile, and the Champion of Maximum Speed. Each category is, after all, a legitimate measure of engine performance.

Ultimately, our concern over speed versus acceleration was academic, for one bike emerged as the clear overall winner—but not until after we had overcome a few hurdles and dealt with some surprises along the way. For one, accurately measuring the top speeds of these street missiles required more flat, straight riding room than we were going to find around any kind of civilization. It also called for some means of measurement other than the bikes' speedometers (usually highly optimistic) or a radar gun (often inconsistent). The solution was found in the wide-open desolation of El Mirage dry lake, where we set up a straight-line, 2-mile speed course with electronic timing lights bracketing a 100-foot-long speed trap at one end.

It didn't take long for a few eyebrows to be raised once Charlie Everitt crawled under the paint on each machine and rocketed it through the lights. Because we were flat astounded when the highly acclaimed V65 Magna tied the GS1100ES for last place in the top-speed competition, with a clocking of just over 139 mph. There's no question the Magna is much more powerful than the Suzuki, but several other factors limit its maximum speed. The bike has a rather large frontal area due to its street-custom configuration, and, more to the point, it has the highest coefficient of drag of the five (it's the only one without some sort of fairing). Further, the Magna's overdrive top (sixth) gear is too tall to let the engine get anywhere near its maximum rpm, yet running at redline in fifth gear nets only approximately 135 mph.

There was no battle for third place, which was the sole possession of the Katana; it consistently ran 142 mph precisely at redline in top gear. But the speed runs turned into a full-scale war between the two Kawasakis when it came time to decide first place. Every time one Kawasaki posted a certain speed, the other one promptly matched that speed exactly. And after a half-dozen runs each, the two Kawasakis still were deadlocked in a tie, both having clocked fastest runs of 145.07 mph.

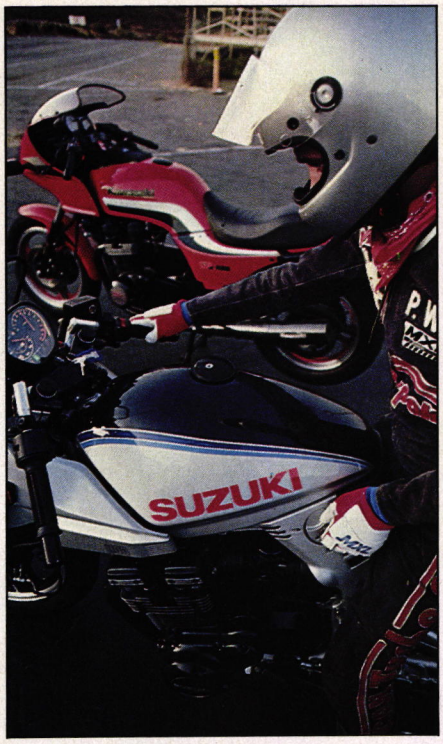
In an attempt to break the tie, we moved the timing lights from 100 feet apart to 226.5 feet (the limit imposed by the wiring attached to the light units), creating a longer speed trap that should have magnified any minute differences in speed. But to our utter amazement and dismay, the two Kawasakis still were inseparable as far as their top speeds were concerned. Another half-dozen runs on each bike netted increasingly slower

speeds (the ambient air temperature was rising and so was that of the engines) ranging from 144.33 to 141.68 mph, but the decline was always at the same rate on both machines. We even tried having Everitt sit bolt-upright during a pass through the lights in hopes that some quirk of aerodynamics would yield a small differential in speed, but even that tactic resulted in precisely the same numbers: 137.89 mph. Obviously, when Kawasaki's engineers told us during our test of the 750 Turbo (July 1983 issue) that they had deliberately endowed the Turbo with exactly as much horsepower as the GPz1100, they meant *exactly*.

Leaving the dry lake with no more than a tie for first place meant our assault on the quarter-mile carried even more significance than we had anticipated. Which is why, with so much at stake, we hired Pee Wee Gleason to pilot our five crotch-rockets on the dragstrip. The 5-foot-7, 140-pound Gleason is arguably the fastest stock-bike dragracer in the country, but of greater importance to us was his uncanny ability to jump from one bike to another and instantly make all of the adjustments necessary to get the quickest, cleanest launch. And that kind of rider-consistency was a must, for the quarter-mile times had to be a true reflection of each bike's accelerative potential, not a measure of the rider's ability to cope with each machine's idiosyncrasies. The final outcome of our project virtually depended on it.

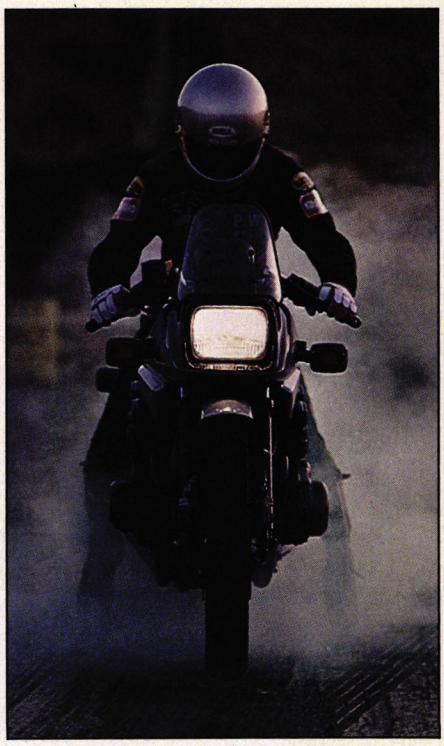
We knew we had made the right choice of riders the moment Gleason began launching these 100-plus-horsepower missiles down Carlsbad Raceway's quarter-mile strip. He was as efficient and calculating as a computer, constantly assimilating all of the information he could see, hear and feel as he left the start line, all the while making hundreds of tiny corrections every second to optimize each run. Consequently, every one of the bikes—with the exception of the GS1100ES—dipped into the 10-second bracket. The GS-ES Suzuki's best effort was an 11.118/119.84 run—certainly not what anyone could term "slow," but still more than a tenth of a second behind the Katana's 10.987/122.28 best. And the Katana, despite its fourth-place finish in the drags, surprised everyone by becoming the first of those Muth-styled sportbikes ever to get into the tens. In fact, the third-best dragrace finisher, the GPz1100, beat the Katana only by 0.005 second (10.982 E.T.) and was a full mph slower in terminal speed (121.29 mph).

Of greater consequence, though, was



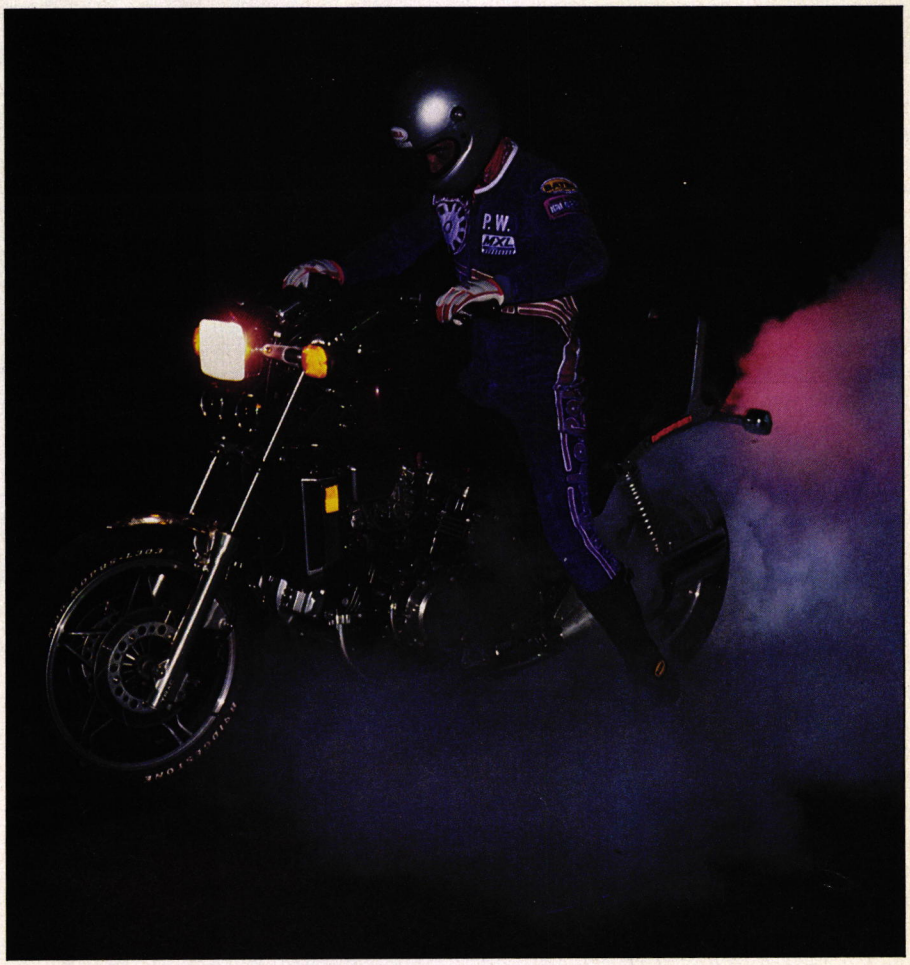
Gleason checks into his 110-hp office

Just another day at the plant.



Muth-styled Suzuki 1100 set a record of sorts

The first Katana to break into the tens.



The Magna doing its part for clean air on the West Coast

But for good reason, such as warming the rear tire to its formidable task.

Continued

Kawasaki's fearsome 750 Turbo doesn't trouble you with turbo-lag; it threatens you with *jet* lag.

that the GPz, the bike that had been tied for the lead after the top-speed competition, was not going to score an overall win, leaving the door wide-open for the 750 Turbo. The only thing standing between the Turbo and victory was the V65 Magna, although that was no small obstacle. The Magna might not have outrun the competition at the dry lake, but this quarter-mile strip of blacktop was the big vee-four's cup of high-performance tea, the ideal place for it to put its massive horsepower to work.

That proved to be easier said than done, however, because both the Magna and the Turbo were the most difficult of the five for Gleason to get off the line cleanly—the Magna because of the awkwardness of its radically pulled-back, Easy-Rider handlebars, the Kawasaki because of its need to be right in the sweet spot of the turbocharger's boost range when the clutch was turned loose. But Gleason was up to the task, and after a couple of dozen virtually flawless runs, the question was laid to rest. For while the V65 managed an impressive 10.901/123.28, the blown Kawasaki soundly defeated it, booming out a stunning 10.839/122.95. And if you're confused because the Turbo, despite being considerably quicker than the Magna, was also marginally slower in terminal speed, don't be; it's common in quarter-mile competition for a quicker machine to post a slightly slower speed. In many cases this happens because the quicker bike's higher rate of acceleration over a fixed distance gives it less time to gather speed. Besides, in dragracing, it's the machine that gets there first that wins, not the one that is going the fastest when it arrives.

Eyeballing the timing lights in the crucible of speed at El Mirage

Still, no amount of LED-watching could distinguish the 750 Turbo from the GPz1100.

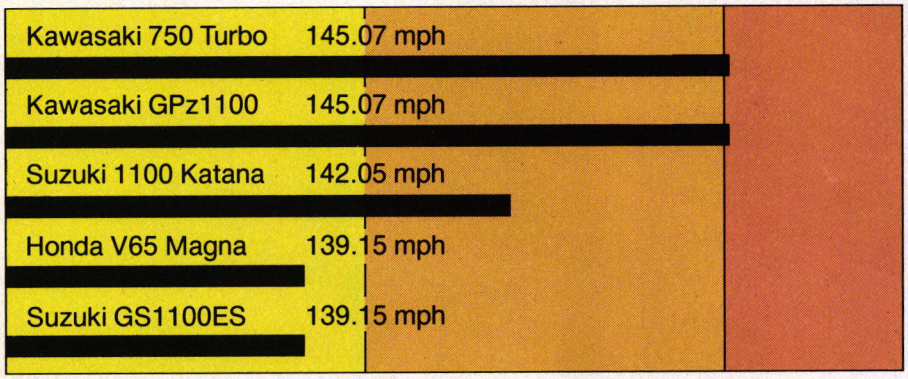
And, indeed, the 750 Turbo does win—not just the dragracing segment of our warp-speed Olympics, but the overall honors, too. Numbers don't lie, and the ones that lit up on Carlsbad's Chrondek timers proved that the Turbo, despite a noble challenge from the V65 Magna, unquestionably is the quickest stock motorcycle known to man. And even though the top-speed numbers did not show the Turbo also to be the world's fastest motorcycle, they did demonstrate that no other motorcycle is *faster*.

No matter how you juggle those num-

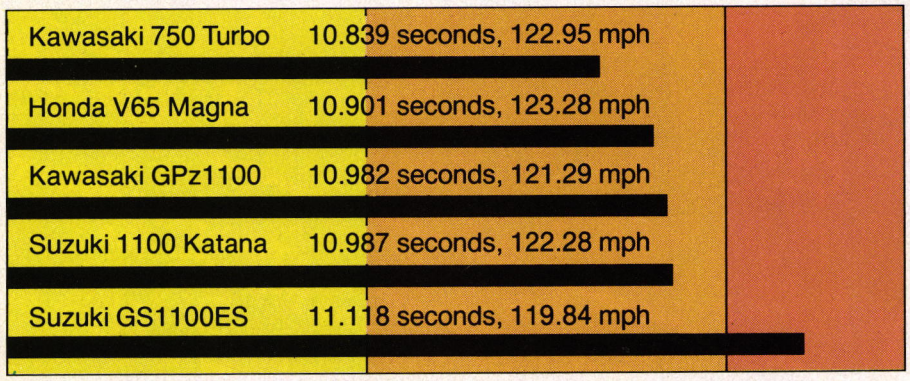
The combatants stand for the playing of the national anthem prior to the start of dragracing activities at Carlsbad Raceway

The moment of calm before the 10-second storm.

TOP SPEEDS



QUARTER-MILE ELAPSED TIMES


Kawasaki 750 Turbo 10.839 seconds, 122.95 mph
Honda V65 Magna 10.901 seconds, 123.28 mph
Kawasaki GPz1100 10.982 seconds, 121.29 mph
Suzuki 1100 Katana 10.987 seconds, 122.28 mph
Suzuki GS1100ES 11.118 seconds, 119.84 mph
10:00 seconds
10:50 sec.
11:00 sec.

bers, the conclusion remains the same: If you want to ride The King of Speed, you want Kawasaki's 750 Turbo, the most potent production machine available now—or ever, for that matter. What's more, Kawasaki's Turbo marks the first time a turbobike has made good on one important aspect of The Great Turbocharging Promise of a few years back: It gives you a combination of civilized around-town manners and mind-fogging, flat-out performance that you can't get with a normally aspirated bike.

Indeed,when the 750 Turbo hits its full stride, when it's in the midst of exploding down the road like something just discharged from a cannon and, wide-eyed and white-knuckled, you're hanging on for dear life, your biggest problem isn't turbo lag; it's *jet* lag. •

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Special alloy steel enable every link of Tsubaki chain to carry maximum tensile strength. Over 65 years of quality in every link.

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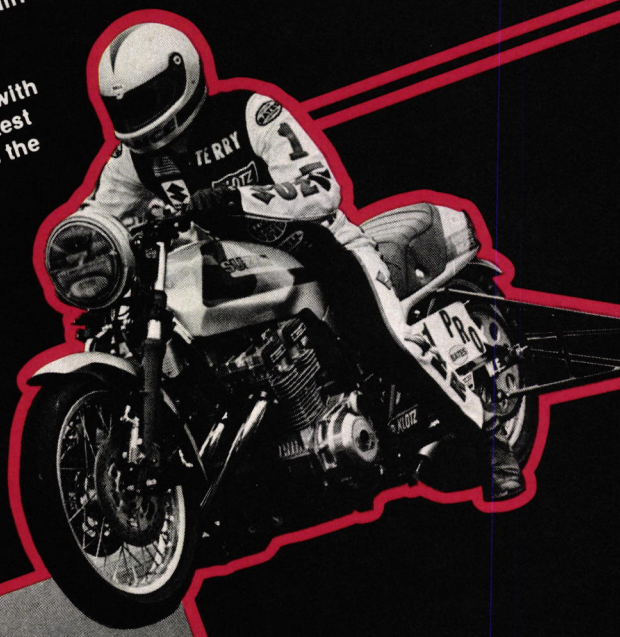
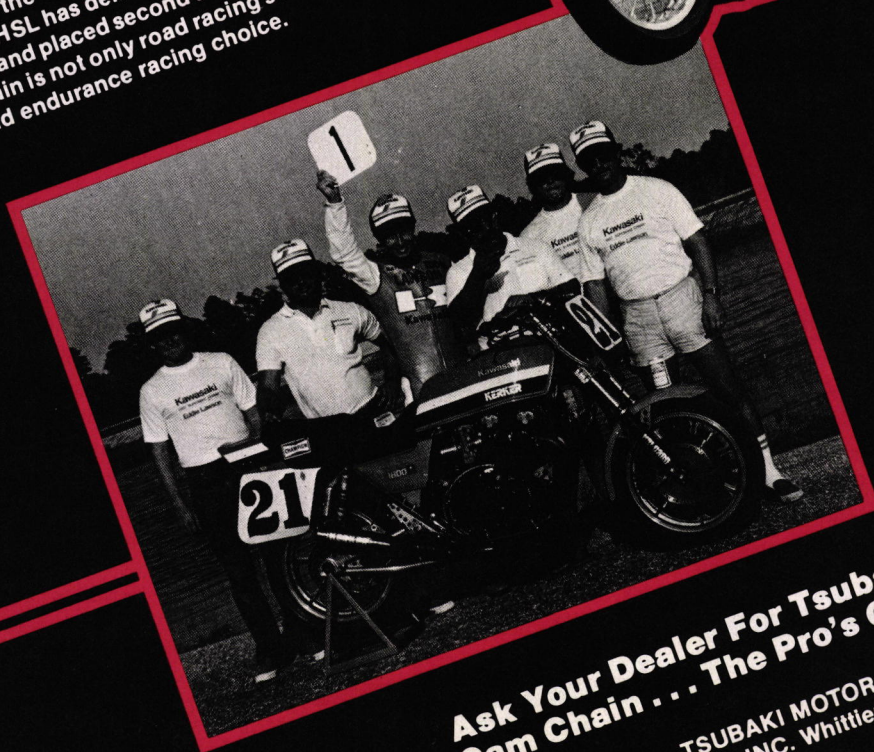
Most stretch is caused by an irregular round shape of bushing and/or uneven wall thickness. Tsubaki bushings are made with a special curl-forming technique to insure roundess and uniform wall thickness.

Pre-Stressing and Perfect Pitch Control
Each pitch of every Tsubaki chain is pre-stressed on actual sprocket teeth applying one-third of the average tensile strength automatically after assembling. This gives a perfect concordance on joint parts of the roller chain and minimizes chain stretch.

Terry Vance, 9 time National Drag Racing Champion. Terry along with master Tuner/Designer Byron Hines has consistently fielded the quickest, fastest and most successful drag bikes in the world. Consistency in performance is the reason Terry has dominated drag racing, it's also the reason he uses Tsubaki chain. Terry's race proven choice is "off the shelf" Tsubaki QR drive chain and cam chain. It's the one chain made tough enough to take you a long, long way . . . even a 1/4 mile at a time.



Team Kawasaki swept the Superbike competition for the 2nd year in a row, closing out the 7th and final year of A.M.A. 1000cc Superbike competition. Tsubaki HSL has delivered the incredible power for the winning effort 6 of 7 years, and placed second the remaining year. Tsubaki Heavy Duty Self Lube chain is not only road racing state of the art in the U.S. . . . it's also the world endurance racing choice.



TSUBAKI

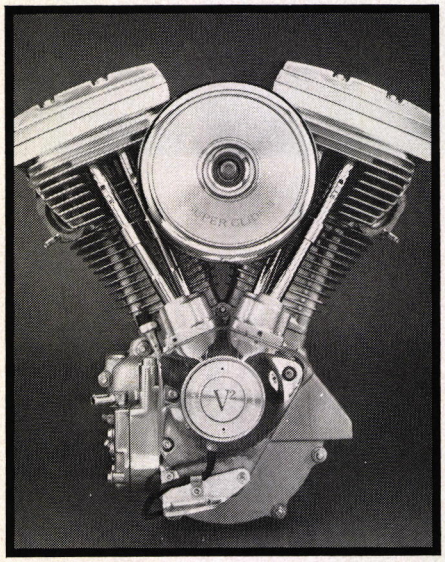
Ask Your Dealer For Tsubaki Drive and Cam Chain . . . The Pro's Choice

TSUBAKI MOTORCYCLE CHAIN
UST, INC. Whittier, CA U.S.A.

GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY JOE KRESS

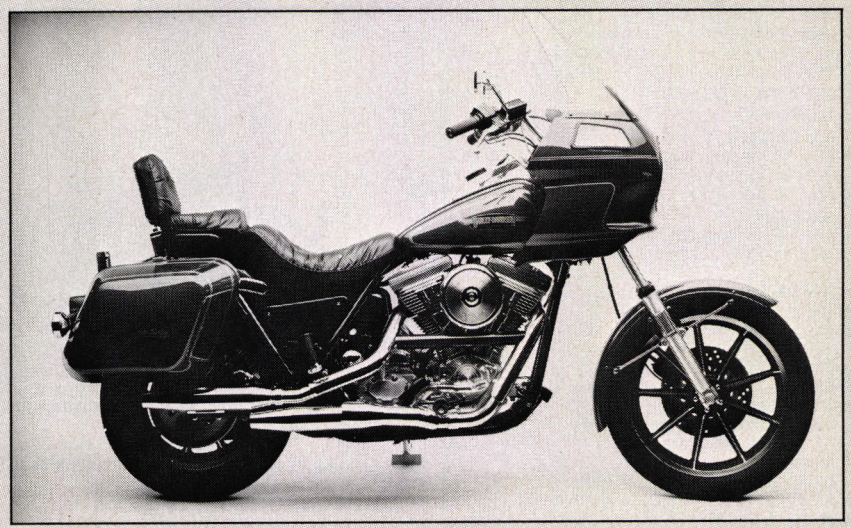


Harley-Davidson redesigned its Big Twin

All-new from the crankcase up.

What better place to mount a new engine than in a new motorcycle?

The FXST Softtail hides its rear suspension, but not its old-time look.



This year's FXRT is even sportier with its V² Evolution Engine power

So much so that it has a new name: the Sport Glide.

COMING SOON

• Harley-Davidson's V² Evolution Engine is ready, after 5600 hours on the dyno and 750,000 test-miles. This 80-cubic-inch vee-twin is virtually all-new from the crankcases up, and produces a claimed 10 percent more horsepower and 15 percent more torque than did the old 80-inch Shovelhead twin. Like the Shovelhead it replaces, the V² engine is a two-valve, pushrod design, but new combustion chambers, valve angles, piston configurations, sparkplug locations and camshaft profiles account for the added performance. The new engine also has aluminum cylinder barrels (with pressed-in liners) in place of the iron ones, and hollow, one-piece pushrods that not only are lighter than the old units, but also channel oil to the engine's top end, eliminating external oil lines. The V² engine is the final step in Harley's program to evolutionize its big-twin series, a process that began in 1980 with the FLT. That bike's frame, and the frames for the FXR and FXRT models introduced later, were designed to accommodate the taller V² engine.

• But to really showcase the new engine, Harley built its all-new FXST Softtail. The Softtail takes the factory-custom premise right to the edge, providing the look of a pre-'57 rigid-frame H-D with the suspension and ride quality expected of a 1984 motorcycle. The Softtail's hardtail look comes from twin, gas-charged rear shocks mounted horizontally between the lower frame tubes, underneath the engine and out of sight. In classic custom style, the Softtail comes with a chrome-plated, horseshoe-shaped oil tank, pullback handlebar, bobbed rear fender and a 21-inch, wire-spoked front wheel. This newest Harley also is one of the lowest; its stepped seat is just 25¼ inches above the pavement.

• The Evolution Engine isn't only for customs, though; the FXRT, introduced last year, also receives the V² powerplant. The RT, now called the Sport Glide, also comes with Harley's newest braking system. Due to an increase in leverage ratio between the master cylinder and calipers, H-D's twin-disc brakes reportedly provide stopping power far better

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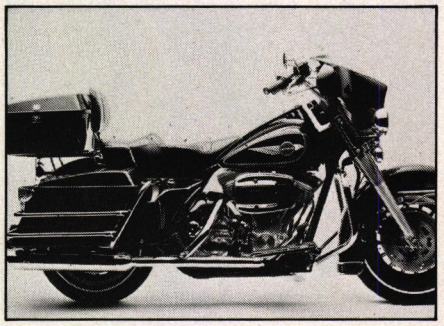
1984 could be the last year for a Harley-Davidson touring tradition

But the Special Edition Electra Glide will go out in style.

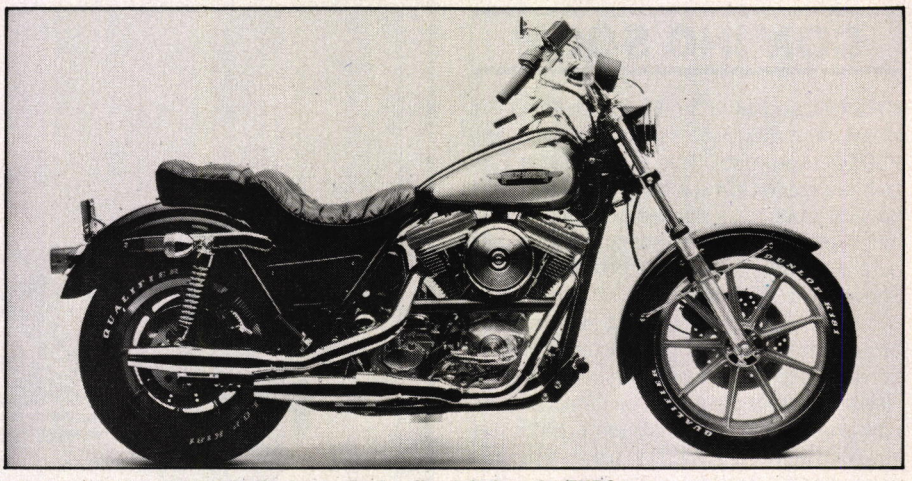
Of course the FLT would have the V² engine

As befits the King Of The Highway.



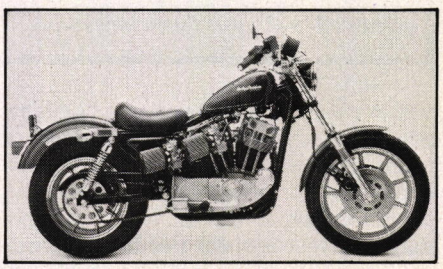
The FLH also uses Evolution Engine power

But keeps its traditional-style fairing.



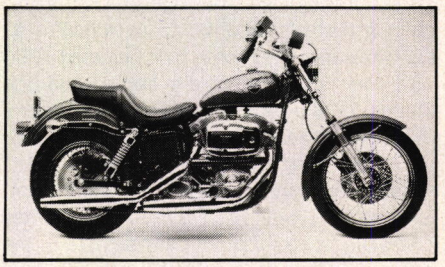
It's no coincidence that the Evolution Engine fits right into the FXRS

This bike was designed with the V² in mind.



Not many changes on the new XR1000

Last year's late entry didn't need them.



Big-Twin power with Sportster looks

It's Shovelhead power for the FXE.

than anything that has ever come out of Milwaukee. With its wind-tunnel-designed fairing and saddlebags, patented anti-dive fork and standard-equipment Dunlop Touring Elite tires, the Sport Glide also offers enough accessories to keep a touring rider comfortable, without, as Harley spokesmen put it, turning this touring bike into a two-wheeled automobile.

• For the full-dress touring rider, Harley offers its Evolution Engine in two bikes for '84: the FLTC Tour Glide Classic and the FLHTC Electra Glide Classic. Both machines are built for long-haul rides, with five-speed gearboxes, Harley's enclosed-chain final drive, Elastomer engine-mounting system, anti-dive forks and triple-disc brakes. Mechanically, the two bikes are so similar it might seem redundant to offer

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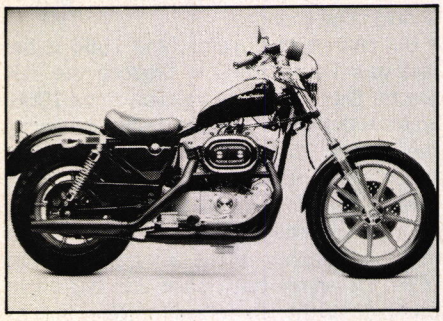

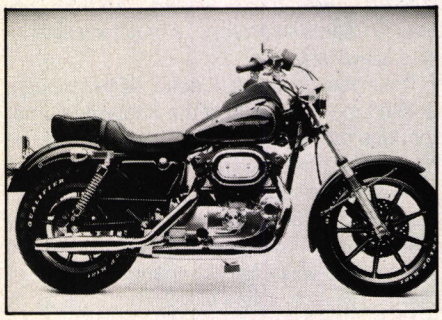

The Sportsters are lighter than ever

Dieting—XL-style—worked.

Some FX-series Harleys still use the traditional Shovelhead twin

Like the FXWG Wide Glide, this year with belt final-drive.

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both models—until H-D tradition enters into the equation. Because while the Tour Glide comes with a new-design, frame-mounted fairing, the Electra Glide Classic still hangs its touring fairing off the handlebar, as have so many Electra Glides before it. Some things, to the Harley-Davidson way of thinking, just shouldn't be changed.

• But change does come, and 1984 is the last year Harley plans to produce the FLH Electra Glide, a touring tradition since 1966. To mark the end of this era, Harley is offering the Special Edition Electra Glide, along with the standard-model FLH. The Special Edition version of this four-speed, Shovelhead-powered tourer is distinguished by its Eagle/"Made in U.S.A." graphics on the fairing and Tour Pac trunk, by wrinkle-black paint and bright-trim package for the Shovelhead engine, and by chromed, wire-spoke wheels. And for the Electra Glide's swan song, a matching sidecar also is available.

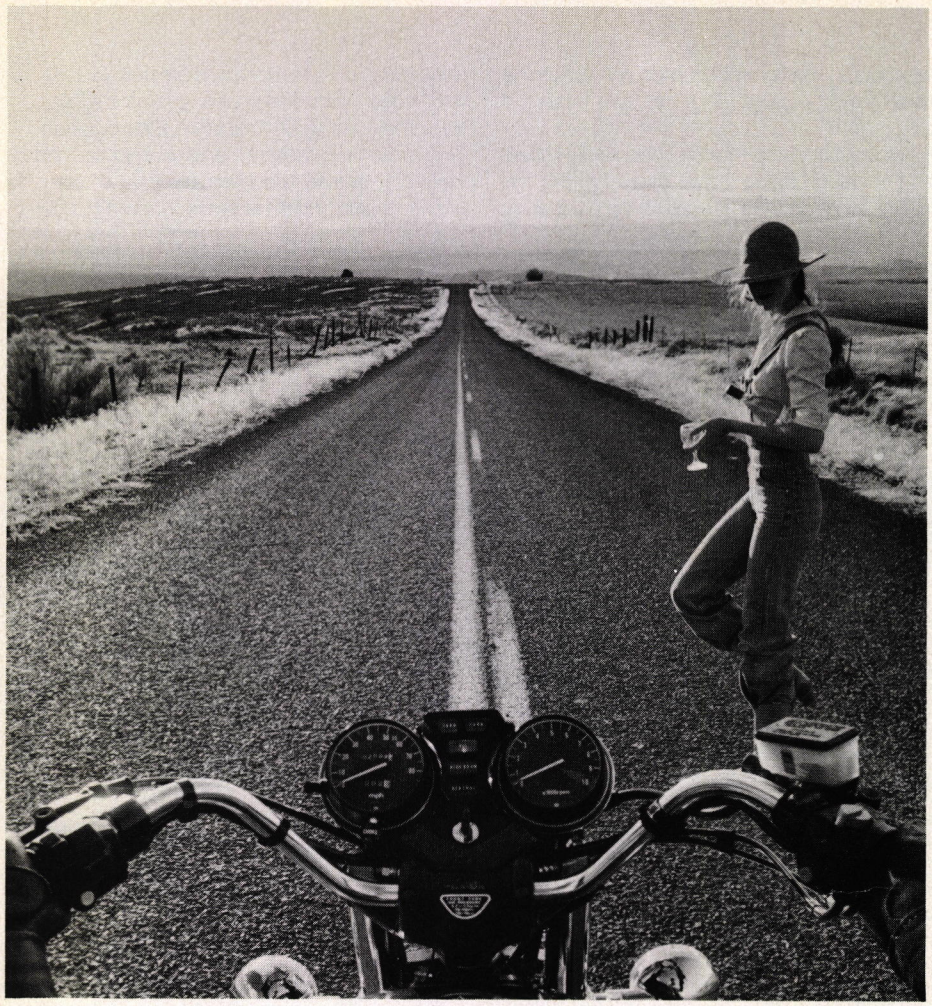
• The passing of the Electra Glide, though, doesn't mean the end of the Shovelhead motor; fans of that engine still have most of the FX-series of bikes to pick from. Starting with the FXE Super Glide, and including the FXSB Low Rider and FXWG Wide Glide, these Big Twin-powered customs still run the gamut from mild to wild. Notable changes for '84 include 11½-inch, single-disc front brakes for all the FXs and belt final-drive as standard equipment on the Wide Glide.

• Harley's 61-cubic-inch, XL-series bikes—the Sportsters—enter '84 lighter and leaner than ever. Heading the list of XL pound-shedders is the Roadster model, which weighs—in its full custom trim—a claimed 486 pounds, 29 pounds less than the 1983 total. Part of that weight loss is due to the Sportster line's new, single-disc front brake, which also helps the standard-version Sportster XLH get to its new, 484-pound claimed weight, 22 pounds less than last year's model. But the lightest Sportster is the XLX-61. That stripped-down streetfighter of '83 has sweated off another 10 pounds, bringing its claimed '84 fighting weight down to a svelte 476 pounds.

FEDERAL CASES

• Now that the possibility of catalytic convertors has been put on the back burner (Federal Cases, September '83), California's motorcyclists have a new challenge ahead of them: Assembly Bill 1456. AB1456 seeks to ban *all* internal-combustion vehicles from the state's highways and, starting in 1992, replace them with "zero-emission electric passenger vehicles." Power for these vehicles would come from cables buried under every street and highway in the state. AB1456 also calls for a $10 million appropriation to fund its development.

• Not all legislators think like California's assemblyman Bill Leonard, though, sponsor of that electrical boondoggle. Some elected representatives demonstrate that they're quite a bit closer to reality. Congressmen



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Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi) and Daniel Crane (R-Illinois) each have introduced legislation aimed against the 55-mph national speed limit. Cochran's bill proposes an outright repeal of the federal mandate, while HR785, Crane's Freedom to Drive Bill, would return control of the highways to the states they pass through. HR785 would allow each state to individually debate the merits of the 55-mph speed limit, changing that limit if it so wishes without fear of losing federal highway money.

• That threat of federal fund withdrawal recently caused the state of Nevada, one of the first states to challenge the double nickel, to raise its fines for convicted speeders. Faced with the loss of federal highway-maintenance money, Nevada raised its fines for speeding from $5 to $15. The increase was meant to show a good-faith enforcement effort by the state, while circumventing a confrontation with the federal government on the issue.

• And in Wyoming a bill that proposed a $5 maximum fine for speeders was vetoed by that state's governor. With the possibility of losing federal funds hanging on the decision, Wyoming's chief executive stopped the $5 fine from becoming law, explaining the obvious by saying such a law would encourage abuse of the 55-mph speed limit.

HARD CASH

• Bimota now has the power. That Italian specialty-frame manufacturer has just concluded an unprecedented deal with Suzuki, whereby Bimota will be receiving the newest Suzuki engines months before Suzuki publicly acknowledges even the existence of the engines. In theory, the result will be a dual showing of the newest Suzukis. Right beside the Japanese version of a Suzuki being introduced will be the Bimota-framed version using the same powerplant. Reportedly, the deal will be in effect for three years, with options to renew. In addition, there's the promise that Bimota also will receive high-performance, factory one-off engines from Suzuki.

• When it comes to deals from Suzuki, however, Bimota isn't alone. Price cuts are becoming a habit with Suzuki, and the latest rider-group to benefit are motocrossers. The RM250 now sells for $1699, $520 less than the old sticker price. And RM125 buyers will have more hard cash left over, too; that racer's new $1349 pricetag is down $390 from its old suggested list.

• Dunlop has sold the rights to develop and market its Dunlopad sintered-metal disc-brake puck. Acquiring the brake-pad business from Dunlop was Phil Ayliff, a former Dunlop employee and onetime chief mechanic for the BRM Formula 1 racecar team. Dunlop isn't completely out of the motorcycle brake business, though. Ayliff's new company will continue to receive its semi-metallic brake-lining material from Dunlop Aviation, a division of Dunlop involved in the development of aircraft braking materials.

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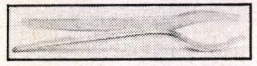

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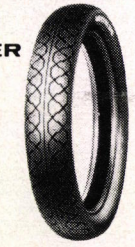

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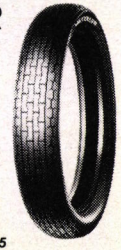

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RIDE/REPORT:

Brooklands Motorcycles' 40M

Anyone interested in an all-new Manx?

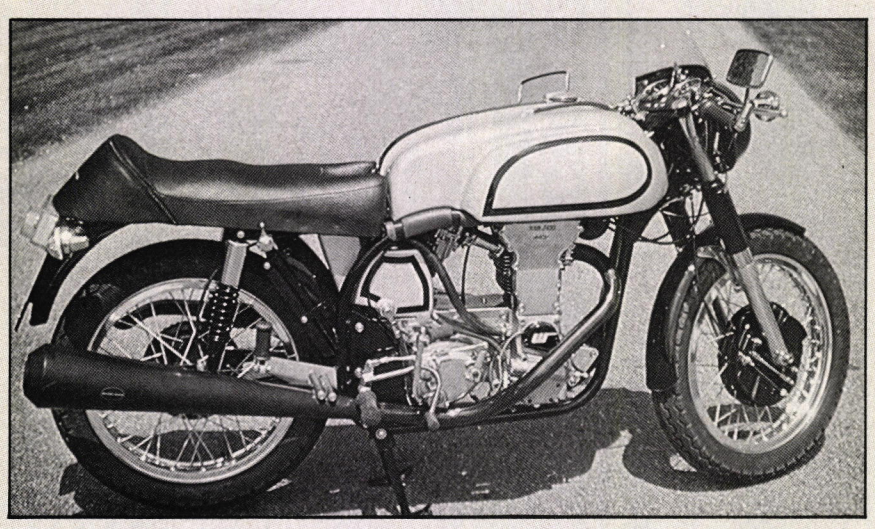
• The most successful and best known of all British GP bikes was the Norton Manx. During its glory years, the Manx was virtually unbeatable. Piloted by the fastest riders of the time, the Manx notched up world championships—in both solo and sidecar classes—with almost monotonous regularity. Not until the introduction of the super-fast, bright-red "fire engines" of Gilera and MV Agusta did this British single have any serious competition. But the success of those bikes marked the end of the era of Norton domination, and the beginning of the end for the British motorcycle industry itself. It was a sad day for Norton enthusiasts, or anyone who loved the crackle of a big single on full song. But it wasn't the end of the Manx.

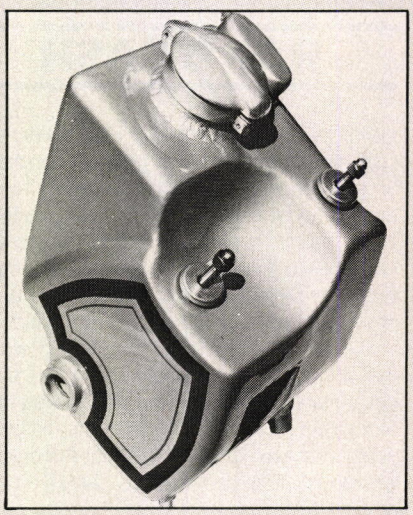
When production stopped in 1962, the Norton Manx soon became (and remains) a sought-after and highly prized motorcycle. But as parts wore out, or were broken in the inevitable racetrack spills, it became obvious that a good supply of quality spares was essential for the Manx to survive.

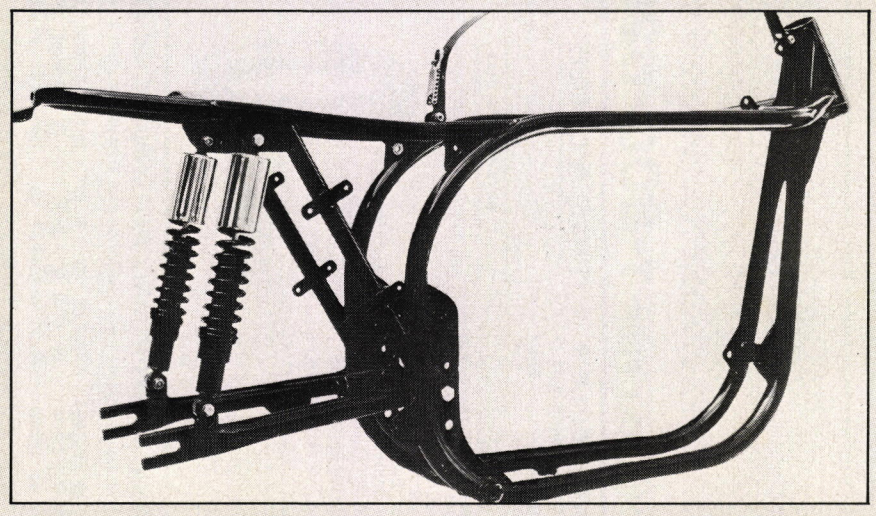
Various companies attempted to fill that need, but none was more efficient than Brooklands Motorcycles. Brooklands is a British outfit, naturally, headed by Ian Thompson, a Manx owner himself. For the past 10 years the company has supplied almost every item a Manx owner could ever need. From frames to pistons, not much was overlooked. But in recent years, Norton enthusiasts began asking for more. Since Brooklands already offered almost all the separate parts of a Manx, the calls started coming in for a complete Manx replica-bike. And although these potential customers were told such a motorcycle never could be inexpensive or mass-produced, the requests for a modern-day Manx kept pouring in. Brooklands finally responded with what you see here—the new-from-the-ground-up 40M.

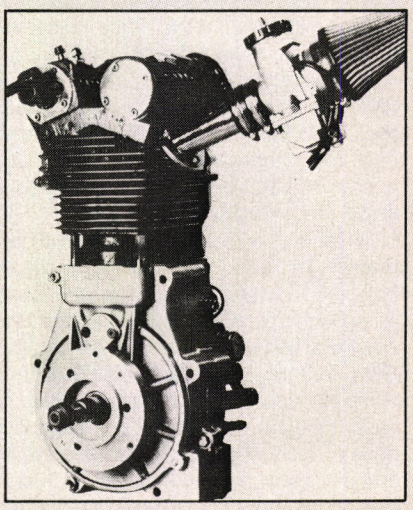
The Brooklands 40M, not surprisingly, is a reflection of a Manx from the 1950–1960 era. Its frame and most of the rolling chassis parts are identical to the original Norton components. And the look is period-perfect, too; the fuel and oil tanks are duplicates of typical Manx parts, right down to the paint scheme and the genuine Monza filler cap on the gas tank.

And that filler cap is just the final touch; the 40M's faithful reproduction of an original Manx starts right at the frame. A replica of the 1955 Featherbed design, the frame used on the factory works racers, is the base for Brooklands' motorcycle. Absolutely no changes were made to the geometry or dimensions of the frame Norton designed so many years ago. It's virtually impossible to distinguish Brookland's 1983 frame from a decades-old Norton









original. The 40M mounts Girling shocks at the rear and its fork is a Norton Roadholder, with only internal changes by Brooklands aimed at smoothing its action. The famed Norton handling is unchanged, though, as are the brakes; original Manx-style drum-types are used, the front being a twin-leading-shoe type.

But those are the cycle parts; for the motor, Brooklands split with tradition. Powering the 40M is an all-new engine, the product of collaboration between Brooklands and Weslake, the noted speedway-engine manufacturer. The new 496.7cc DOHC four-valve single, with an 86.7mm bore and a stroke of 86.6mm, is a modern design, using a roller-bearing mounted one-piece crankshaft. For ease of balancing, the engine's flywheels bolt on separately. A 30mm Amal Concentric is the standard carburetor on the Brooklands, with a 36mm Amal offered as an option. And as might be expected in a new engine design, the 40M's ignition is a transistorized system. Considerable development work went into the exhaust for the 40M, too, which resembles the original Manx parts both in looks and performance, yet complies with modern noise regulations. Brooklands also succeeded in making the 40M meet all emissions standards currently in force, both in Europe and the U.S. And like the engine, the 40M's transmission is an all-new, five-speed design by Brooklands. But for those customers who might still want the bike to shift like an original Manx, a four-speed gearbox is also offered.

The 40M is delivered in street-legal trim. Its 12-volt electrical system includes lights, horns and directionals, even featuring the U.S.-mandated lights-on ignition switch. And early reports indicate that the 40M is no disappointment as a streetbike, either. The Brooklands/Weslake engine reportedly pulls top-gear roll-ons from as low as 28 mph without a stumble, while still allowing top speeds well over 100 mph. Brooklands wanted an engine with a flexible, wide powerband for the 40M, and it seems that Weslake delivered it.

A few of these modern-day Manxes already are in the hands of their new European owners, but so far a U.S. distributor hasn't been found. The 40M isn't inexpensive, but Thompson warned the Manx faithful of that going into the project. Of course, price really won't prevent a rider who wants a part of history from contacting Brooklands directly at its 2 Eton Close, Datchet, Berkshire, England facility. Besides, while calling Brooklands isn't quite the same as placing an order with Norton at the old Birmingham factory, it's as close as anyone's been able to come for decades. And who's to say that this isn't the start of an all-new cult bike? Certainly not Ian Thompson. *—Doug Jackson*

RUMORS

• It seems a safe bet that Honda's middleweight VF-F won't be the only new vee-four sportbike for '84. Kawasaki's three-quarter-liter version of that engine type has progressed to the airbrush-enhanced-photo stage. If this machine doesn't change much between now and its official introduction date, expect one of the most angularly styled Kawasakis in some time. And look for a 16-inch front wheel, leading-axle fork, new-style anti-dive, an optional solo seat and staggered-height exhausts, GP-bike style.

• New engine designs come out of the Honda shop like clockwork, and one of the powerplants we've just heard some more about is the vee-six. Word has it that this engine is through the emissions-testing stage and it's almost ready to take its place on the assembly line. Sport-touring, anyone?

• It's no secret that the best way to go quarter-liter roadracing is on a Yamaha. Using anything other than a TZ250 is doing it the hard way. But here's something that is a secret—Honda might be taking a run at this class, too. The bike, a two-stroke, liquid-cooled twin (what else?), could be offered as soon as this winter. Stay tuned.

• Yamaha isn't standing still, though. From what we've been hearing, that company has another two-stroke streetbike poised for action. How does a 90-horsepower, liquid-cooled, vee-four—with a power valve—sound to you? Would it help any to know that the bike might very well weigh in under 400 pounds? Our European connections tell us to look for the answers this fall.

• Don't be surprised if Laverda's much-talked-about 750cc engine shows up about that time, too. Our reports indicate that liquid-cooling is just one of the features on this Italian-style sportbike, a bike meant to demonstrate conclusively that there's still motorcycling life on the Continent.

• And here's something to really keep under your hat. Carbon-fiber, that high-strength, lightweight modern miracle, already has shown up in fairings, brake discs and other pieces—and it's not over yet. We hear that one prominent helmet manufacturer is looking into a totally carbon-fiber helmet, and not stopping at just that, either. After all, what high-tech helmet would be complete without a fog-free, electrically heated faceshield?

AFTER THE FACT

• As we went to press, we learned from Kawasaki that the production versions of the 750 Turbo will differ slightly in two areas from our test bike, which was a final-stage pre-production model. First, the turbo wastegate on the production units will be non-adjustable, although the maximum boost pressure will be pre-set to the same level (10.8 psi) as on our test bike. In addition, production-line Turbos will use rubberized motor mounts, whereas the engine in our bike was mounted solidly. And since the rubber mounts will prevent the engine from serving as a frame-stiffening member, two horizontal stiffening braces—one between the front downtubes near crankshaft level and one under the gas tank between the backbone tubes—will be added. None of these changes, however, would have affected the outcome of our evaluation.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• This month's Never Say Die award has to go to Montesa. Earlier this year that company reintroduced its Impala-model streetbike (reintroduced meaning that the Impala once again was offered for sale, but with no changes or updates made to its original early-Sixties configuration). Confident that it has a sure-fire sales winner on its hands, Montesa is planning a large-scale shipment of Impalas to Japan itself, reasoning that there must be a huge number of Japanese riders fed up with modern-motorcycle sophistication and eager to return to those simpler days of yesteryear. Good luck.

• MGM/UA Entertainment Co. has a new action film scheduled for release. "The Final Option" stars Lewis Collins, and to spur publicity for the movie MGM/UA sent out press kits on the film and its motorcycle-enthusiast star. The release had its effect, but maybe not the one MGM/UA had hoped for. "My motorcycles are more than ordinary bikes. . . ," Collins is quoted as saying, with the release going on to list some of the actor's machines. The bikes *are* fairly uncommon, but the last one named is a real eye-opener. After all, how often do you get to see a Hailwood Replica Ducati 900 single-stroke, two-seater?

• Malcolm Forbes recently found himself in an embarrassing position. Imagine the eyebrows raised when Forbes, chairman and editor-in-chief of Forbes magazine, discovered that his 64-motorcycle-strong collection didn't include one of the nine most significant bikes of '83, a Can-Am 500MX Sonic. The unthinkable was rectified with a quick call to Can-Am's Valcourt, Quebec headquarters, the big thumper was delivered to Forbes and, once again, all was well in the world-business observer's life. At least until another glaring oversight shows up. •

Mr. Forbes solves a problem

His Collection was missing a Sonic.

TRACK TEST:

Suzuki RM125

Is just as good as ever good enough?

• Success doesn't guarantee further success; just look at what's happened to Suzuki's RM125. Ever since their introduction in 1975, RM125s have been the all-but-unbeatable motocross elite, dominating most tracks in this country, as well as taking every 125cc GP crown since that class was given world-championship status. But the other manufacturers haven't sat idly by while RMs were tearing up motocross tracks around the world; they've constantly refined their own 125s to try to keep up with the Suzukis. And in fact, the CR, KX and YZ have now gone through sufficient refinement that they've not only caught up with the RM, they've surpassed it.

Last year the handwriting was on the wall for the RM, for it was obvious the bike no longer had a horsepower advantage. RMs were still winning, but by smaller and smaller margins. And while Suzuki engineers did subtly refine their bike for '83, they didn't effectively address the need for more power. Instead, they just effected minute port modifications and increased flywheel inertia with a marginally larger-diameter crankshaft. The idea was to make the RM easier to ride at low rpm and to smooth out the power delivery. And although the engine *is* less peaky as a result, the added flywheel also magnifies the RM's power shortage. The motor is reluctant to come on the pipe and doesn't respond well to clutch-fanning. The RM still produces almost as much top-end power as ever, but the bikes it now has to compete against produce more.

Suzuki is having no such trouble keeping up with suspension technology, though. The Full Floater rear suspension was the best single-shock system when it was introduced in 1981, and thanks to Suzuki's development of the system, it still is. The shock struts on the '83 version are made of aluminum rather than steel, and they sit 10mm closer to the swingarm pivot. The shock itself is new, as is the remote reservoir, which now uses a bladder instead of a floating piston to separate the oil from the nitrogen. A four-way compression-damping adjuster has been added on the reservoir, while the shock body retains the four-way rebound-damping adjuster it's had since 1981.

Despite the fact that some other motocross rear suspensions have a greater number of possible damping settings, the RM's adjusters cover just as much adjustment range—sometimes even more. That helps make the Full Floater one of the most versatile rear-shock systems around. The system is able to soak up small bumps and chops with a light rider in the saddle, as well as cushion the biggest thumps and jump-landings with an oversized rider aboard.

There is, however, more room for improvement at the front of the RM. The fork is too soft even for 125-pound riders, yet it still produces a harsh ride at low speeds. A compression-damping adjustment in each fork slider yields a front end that works better than last year's, but the fork still needs better small-bump compliance and more travel before it can match the new standards set by its competition.

Two areas in which Suzuki won't have to spend many development dollars, however, are steering and stability. The RM carves through all manner of corners with the same precision for which it's become famous; you pick the line and the RM simply follows it. And on the fastest, roughest straights, there's never a trace of a wobble in the RM's handling program.

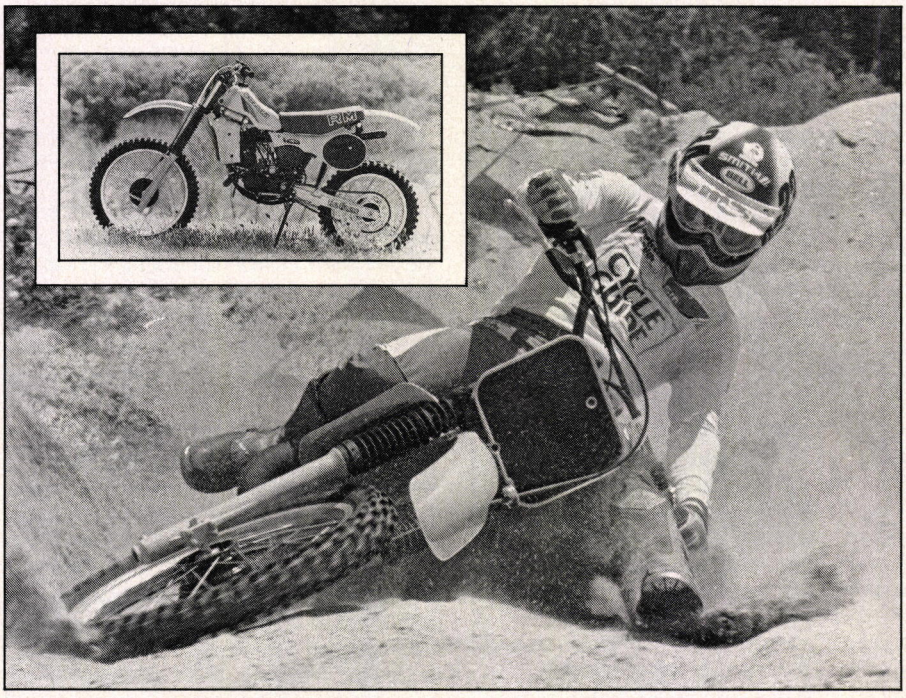
Part of the credit goes to the new Bridgestone tires, which get better traction on all sorts of terrain than did last year's rubber. But "better" certainly does not describe the RM's airbox, which still is the same overcomplicated, inefficient and difficult-to-service aggravation it has been for the past two years. And it's details like the airbox that seem to indicate what has turned the once-unbeatable RM125 into an also-ran: complacency.

As a result, the RM is competitive in just one way—dollars. The bike's $1349 price-tag, hundreds less than the competition's, makes it a perfect choice for a beginner. But if you ride in the intermediate or expert classes, you'd be far more likely to win on something other than an RM. Because while Suzuki might be the most successful name in the history of the 125 class, it's no longer the best. *—Ron Lawson*

SUZUKI RM125D

Importer: U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.
3251 East Imperial Highway
Brea, California 92621

Category	motocross
Suggested retail price	$1349
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, six transfers, one exhaust
Bore and stroke	54.0mm x 54.0mm
Displacement	123.7cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	8.7:1
Carburetion	one 32mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter, compression damping infinitely variable within 8 turns of adjusting screw/10.7 in. (272mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	single Kayaba shock, 4-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 16mm spring preload range/11.8 in. (300mm)
Wheelbase	56.6 to 57.7 in. (1438 to 1465mm)
Seat height	36.6 in. (930mm)
Weight	200 lbs. (90.7kg)
Steering head angle	29.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.76 in. (121mm)
Top speed (observed)	63 mph (101 km/h)
Warranty	none
Available color	yellow only



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

The RM125 still handles the bumps and turns of MX as well as anything in its class

But after running continuously for three years, the engine is beginning to tire.

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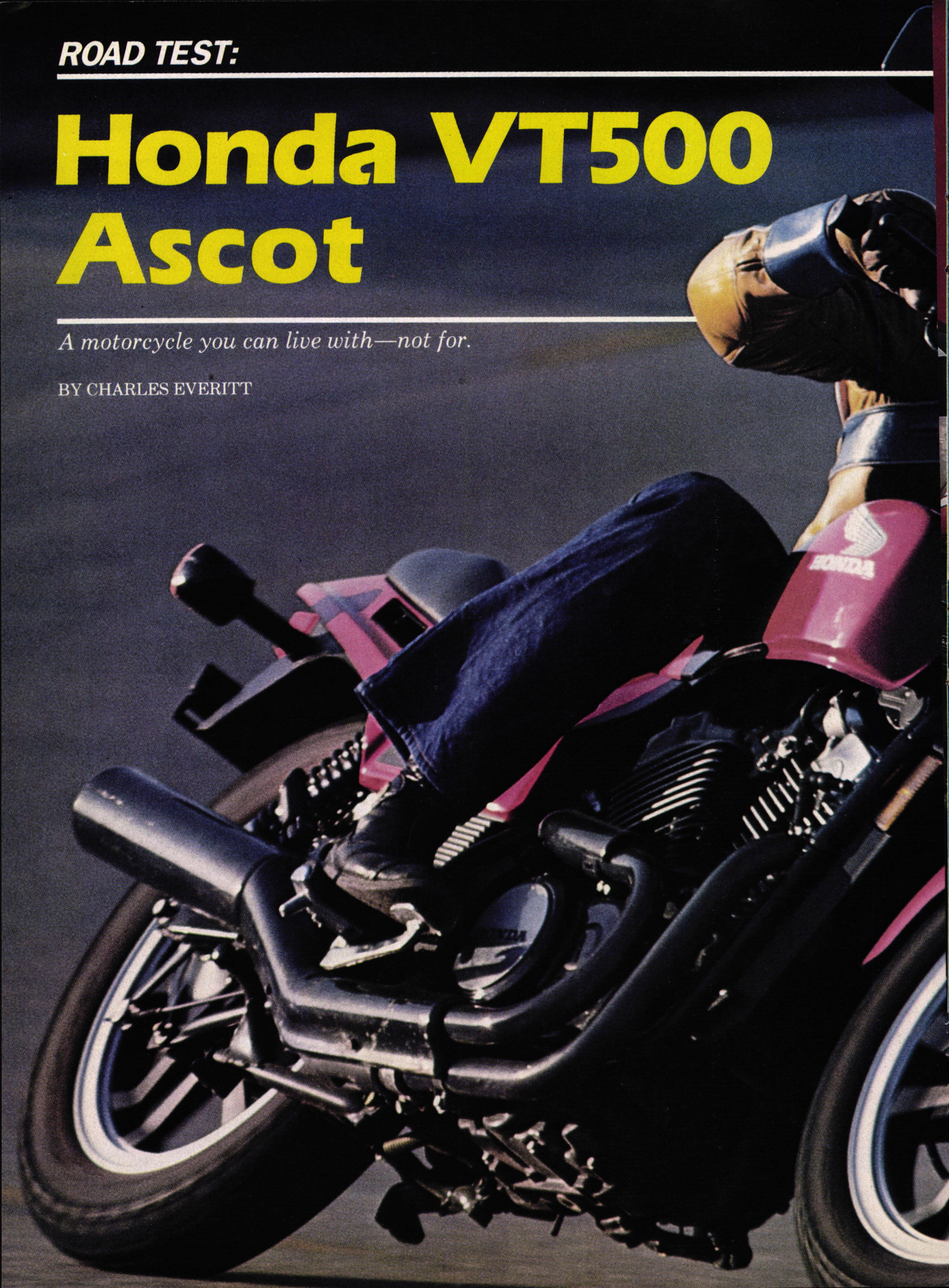
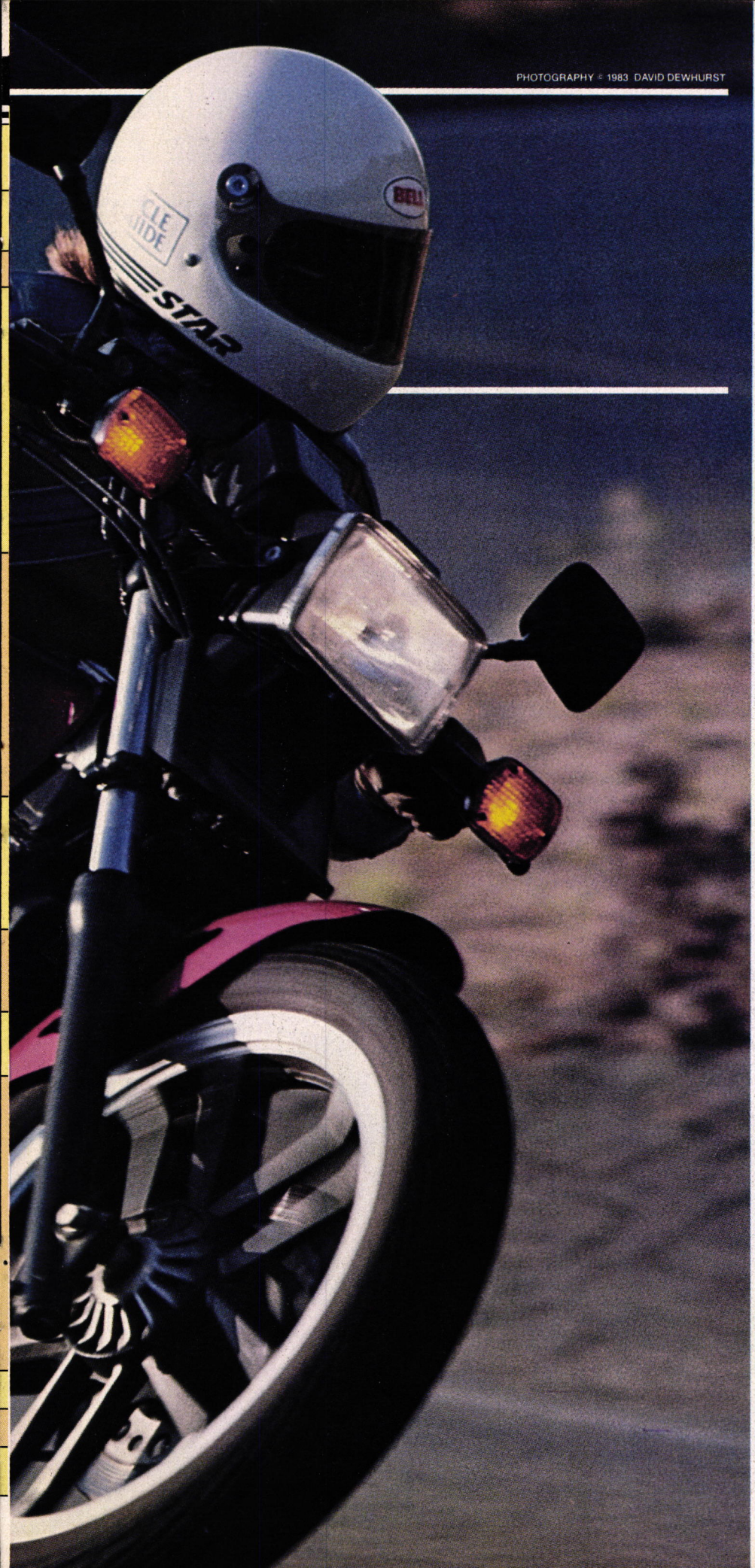
ROAD TEST:

Honda VT500 Ascot

A motorcycle you can live with—not for.

BY CHARLES EVERITT





Take a look at motorcycling's burgeoning 500-550cc class, and what do you see? Rampant specialization, that's what. The class increasingly is becoming populated with uncompromising sportbikes and triple-distilled cruisers. And there's a certain logic to the increased polarity among half-liter bikes. Their relatively small size—both in overall scale and in engine capacity—inherently limits the number of tasks they can perform well. Specialization, then, makes sense; give a motorcycle a tighter focus, and it can more easily excel at its intended purpose.

That escalating specialization, though, has left a gaping hole in the center of the half-liter market that's filled by too few general-purpose motorcycles. There's still a need for broader-spectrum bikes; for machines that don't typecast their riders in the role of dyed-in-the-leathers, would-be racers, or in the bad-dude cruiser image. There's room for the kind of motorcycle that can accommodate its rider, rather than forcing him to accommodate *it*.

Honda's VT500 Ascot is such a motorcycle. The VT shares its market slot and name with Honda's single-cylinder FT500 Ascot, which was introduced in 1982. Both Ascots have the same general appeal, too, as simple, inexpensive, wideband motorcycles that can attract experienced riders as well as first-time buyers.

But the thumper lacked an important ingredient: horsepower. So Honda addressed that shortcoming by equipping its newest Ascot with a 491cc, liquid-cooled, 52 degree vee-twin engine, which not only sets the VT apart from other offerings in a class dominated by four-cylinder engines, but provides a welcome dose of horsepower, too. If you need convincing, just check the VT500's quarter-mile time; at 13.628 seconds and 93.75 mph, it's more than a second quicker than the thumper, and 10 mph faster.

More important than dragstrip times, though, is how easy the VT Ascot is to live with. The vee-twin starts instantly with full choke, and chuffs quietly at slightly above idle-rpm, instead of revving wildly like some other engines. There's no hint of cold-blooded behavior, either; just punch the Ascot into gear and ride away. The bike pulls smoothly when cold, without wheezing, gasping or staggering.

Once the 50/50 mix of water and antifreeze is warmed, you can sample the even, predictable power-delivery that has endeared vee-twins to riders for decades. The VT Ascot's claimed 47 horsepower starts building from the moment you

Continued

crack the throttle open, and continues on up to the 9500-rpm redline, with no stumbling or surges that might upset ridability. There is, however, an almost-unnoticeable increase in power above 6000 rpm.

The engine's easy-to-manage power can accommodate different riding styles, too, allowing the VT pilot to either short-shift the engine or rev it freely. Precise carburetion from the twin 32mm Keihin constant-vacuum units further helps the VT's tractability. The engine can be lugged down to 2000 rpm in sixth gear or 1500 rpm in fifth, and rolling the throttle open from that speed produces nary a cough nor a lurch—just smooth acceleration, without complaint. That kind of flexibility makes the VT Ascot supremely easy to ride.

Honda didn't merely rely on cylinder multiplication to give the VT more power than the single-cylinder Ascot has. Instead, the VT benefits from higher-tech combustion chambers than those on the FT. Where the FT uses a four-valve head, the VT has a three-valve setup with a narrower included valve angle. The result is shallower, more-compact combustion chambers that allow a faster, more efficient burning of the fuel mixture.

To complement the combustion chambers, the VT also uses twin-sparkplug ignition for each cylinder. That's a feature shared with the VT750 Shadow powerplant—which isn't too surprising, because both motors were designed by the same team of engineers. And the virtues of twin-plug ignition are the same for both engines, too. Honda claims that firing two plugs in each cylinder helps cut combustion time in half compared to a single-plug ignition, which, in concert with comparatively late ignition timing, permits using a high compression ratio (10.5:1 for the VT500) without detonation. In addition, the VT's intake ports and the heart-shaped combustion chambers' squish bands promote swirling of the incoming fuel charge, which also helps make the VT an exceptionally clean-burning engine. That's especially interesting when you consider Honda's claim that the VT500 engine wouldn't need a catalytic convertor to meet California's proposed exhaust-emissions regulations.

There are other similarities between the Ascot's vee-twin motor and the VT750 Shadow's, too, such as liquid-cooling, geared primary drive and shaft final drive. That doesn't mean the VT500's powerplant is just a shrunken version of the VT750's, though. The smaller engine, for instance, gets screw-type valve-adjusters in place of the 750's no-maintenance hydraulic adjusters, partly to keep the Ascot's price down, and because Honda's supplier couldn't make enough of the hydraulic units to equip both engines. The 500 also has a standard, cable-operated clutch instead of the VT750's hydraulically actuated, one-way, Sprague-type clutch.

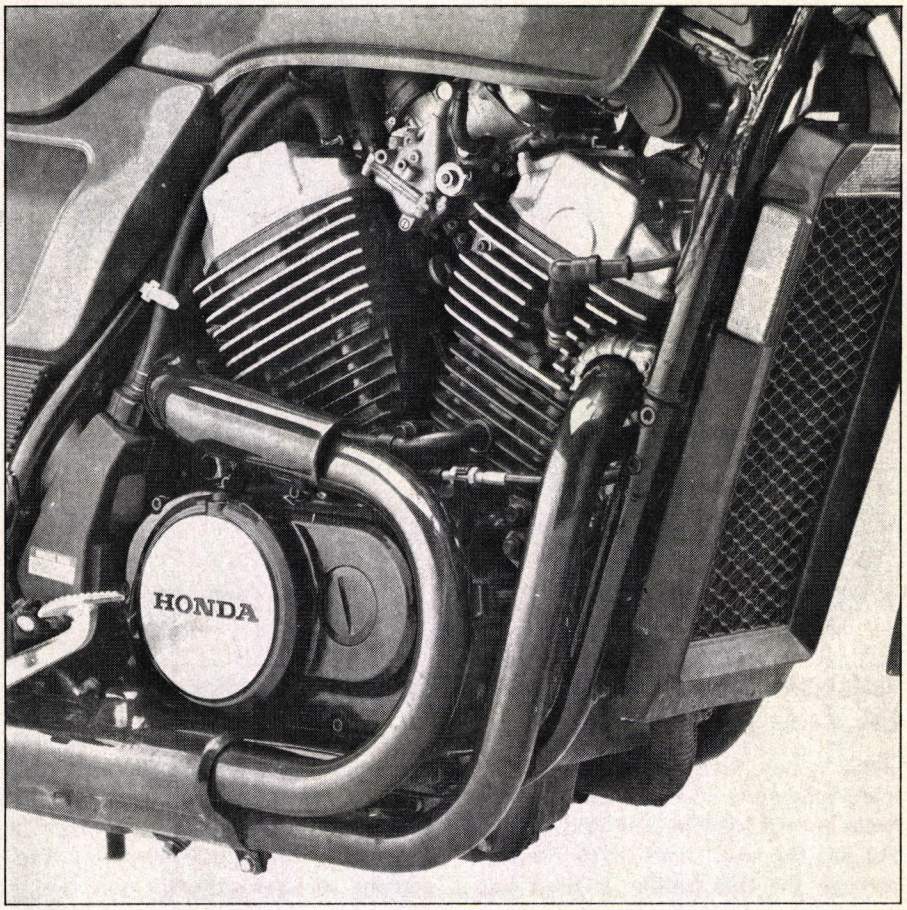
Despite those differences, the engines are essentially the same, even down to Honda's innovative offset-crankpin system that, in effect, results in the same perfect primary balance of a 90 degree vee-twin. The system of crankpin offset is common to the VT500 and VT750 engines, but the amount of offset is 14 degrees less in the smaller motor due to its wider vee-spread (52 degrees vs. 45 degrees). That broader cylinder-spread was necessitated by the 500's shorter stroke, which allowed less room for the carburetors in the crotch of the vee; consequently, the cylinder angle was widened.

Honda claims its crankpin technotrickery saves 2 horsepower and 3 kilograms compared to a counter-rotating balancer system, in addition to endowing the engine with perfect primary balance. Maybe so, but don't think the VT doesn't shake at all. True enough, the bike is serenely smooth at lower engine speeds—amazingly so for a vee-twin engine. The only strong vibration occurs at 5000 rpm—which the Ascot's optimistic

speedometer indicates as 70 mph in top gear—yielding a low-frequency buzz through the handgrips. But past five grand, the vibration becomes far more subdued, and shifts from the grips to the footpegs.

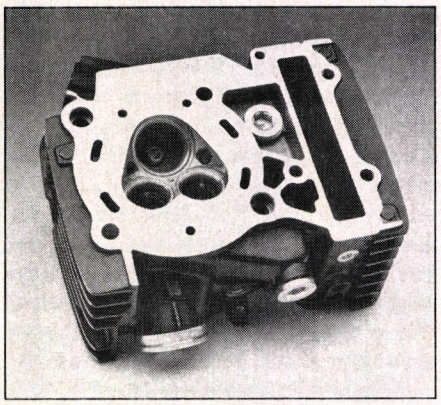
For the kind of day-in/day-out riding that makes up a wide-band bike's bread and butter, such as riding on the freeway to work, or putting down to the corner store, you probably won't experience the Ascot's relatively unobtrusive shaking. You *will* notice the engine's wide spread of power, though, and how accommodating the VT500 is around town. The generous supply of torque almost lets the bike idle away from a stop, while the clutch's extraordinarily light pull and broad engagement team up with the bike's low-effort steering and narrow, light overall feel to make running the gauntlet of inner-city traffic seem absurdly simple. And the Ascot is just as happy and willing doing commuter duty at double-nickel speeds on the freeway, although the bike is a tad short of roll-on power in its tall, overdrive sixth gear. Change down a cog or two through the clean-shifting gearbox, though, to get the revs up near six grand, and the Ascot will accelerate smartly.

Surface-street cruising or freeway commuting inevitably mean short-duration trips, and there are elements of the VT Ascot's character that encourage the rider to curtail *all* his trips. The bike's ergonomics best-suit riders up to 5 feet 10 inches tall, because although there's plenty of room between the saddle and the wide, tubular handlebar, the high footpegs encroach on leg room. The saddle itself is flat and doesn't confine the rider to one spot, but it's also hard, narrow and contributes to numb-butt. Stiff springs at both ends of the bike do their part to limit trip distance, too. Even with zero air pressure in the front fork and minimum preload cranked into the non-damping-adjustable dual rear shocks, the VT Ascot doesn't respond well to small,



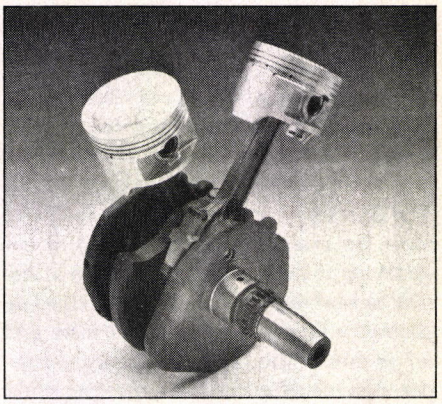
Liquid-cooled 52 degree vee-twin engine offers a satisfyingly wide spread of power

And makes for a more potent Ascot, too.



Three-valve head uses twin-plug ignition

For quick, clean combustion.



VT500's crank with 76 degree pin-offset

So you won't be shaking all over.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph,ft.
Honda VT500 Ascot—'83	13.628/93.75	112	411	129
Yamaha XZ550R Vision—'83	13.422/95.23	112	483	124
Honda Nighthawk 550—'83	12.461/102.97	114	429	125
Kawasaki GPz550—'83	12.647/102.97	132†	438	144
Suzuki GS550E—'83	12.593/104.04	120	443	135
Honda FT500 Ascot—'82	14.915/83.72	97†	360	146

† indicates a calculated top speed

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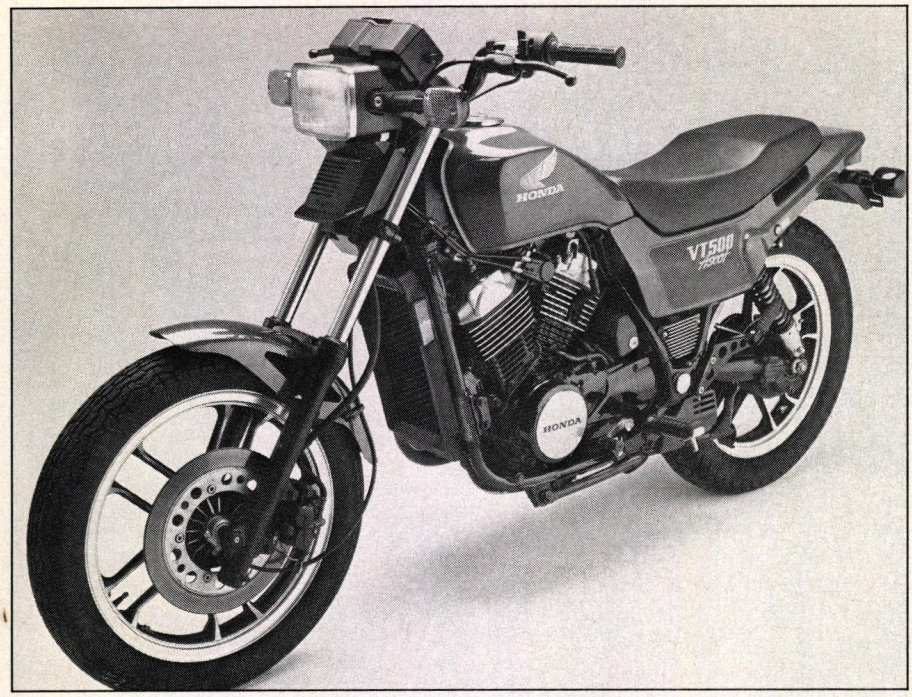


Honda Ascot's general-purpose role is a rarity in the specialized half-liter class

One of a diminishing breed of motorcycles.

sharp bumps, with the shocks being the main offenders. The VT handles other types of road irregularities easily enough but lets the small stuff jab at the rider through the thin saddle. A short fuel-range—89 to 117 miles during our testing—and lack of cargo-carrying capacity don't exactly invite touring jaunts, either.

Not too many riders will lament the VT Ascot's touring limitations, but they certainly should appreciate the bike's sporting potential. That's especially so in moderately tight, third- and fourth-gear corners, where the torquey vee-twin can pull the bike from turn to turn, easily. The Ascot's power delivery lets the rider focus his attention on the road, and not on trying to keep the engine within a narrow powerband. And while the steering geometry figures (31 degrees of rake and 5.7 inches of trail) suggest sluggish, super-slow steering manners, nothing could be further from the truth. The wide handlebar and a low center of gravity make for low-effort directional changes, yet the VT Ascot isn't the slightest bit twitchy at speed; in fast corners, the bike remains reassuringly stable. Nor is the VT hurting for cornering clearance; its narrowness, in part due to the skinny-hipped, vee-twin engine, lets you lean way, *way* over before anything scrapes the pavement. When something does touch down, it is the footpeg first on the left, and the peg and exhaust shield on the right.

The VT Ascot's stopping power from its big, single-disc front brake and drum rear brake also encourage the rider to charge into corners. Both brakes haul the bike down from speed surely and quickly, with exceptional feedback, although the front disc takes a moderately high amount of lever pressure and can be faded with hard use. There's a fair amount of nosedive during all-out stops, but the fork actually doesn't compress as quickly under braking as some forks equipped with anti-dive units other than Honda's excellent TRAC system.

There are a few limitations to the VT Ascot's potential on backroads, though. Abrupt, on/off use of the throttle uncovers some chassis-jacking of the type common to most shaft-drive motorcycles. And bumpy turns upset the VT, unless you go to 6 psi in the fork (0–6 psi is the suggested range) and up to No. 3 preload (for a 150-pound rider) on the shocks; even then a long, hard ride will fade the slightly underdamped shocks.

But those are flaws at the outer reaches of performance, zones not normally traversed by general-purpose bikes. The Ascot isn't really intended to go wheel-to-wheel with the fireballs in the half-liter class, though it can, if you pick your spots carefully. And in the middle ground between those riding extremes, the VT serves up a surprisingly large slice of motorcycling. In the end, that's the true worth of a general-purpose motorcycle, especially when it's as capable as this one. The Ascot isn't confined to life in the fast lane or to patrolling the boulevards. It's a motorcycle you can live with, rather than live for. •

Ride Review

• Half-liter bikes are commonly considered middleweights, but to call the Ascot a middleweight is stretching the point. It's too light, too nimble and, unfortunately, too slow for my idea of a middleweight. But never mind, it's neat. The Ascot is perfect for knocking around town, and can change direction faster than a beagle after a rabbit. My major complaint is a too-high handlebar; you don't sit on an Ascot—you perch on it. It feels more like a scooter than a real motorcycle.

But you won't find a scooter with a vee-twin engine. That's a motorcycle engine, by God, and the Ascot brings that age-old design up to date with three-valve heads, liquid-cooling and a usable 9500-rpm redline. If I were in the market for a sporty lightweight, I'd take a hard look at an Ascot—one with a different handlebar. —*Jim Miller*

• I have two things to say about the VT500 Ascot: One, I know it's neither the fastest nor the best-handling in its class; and two, I like it anyway—mostly *because* it's not a two-wheel superlative.

See, most of the bikes in the 500/550 class either are roadracers designed to tear up the backroads, or laid-back customs meant to ease on down the boulevard. But there's a whole world of riding fun to be had between those two extremes, and the Ascot serves its inhabitants nicely. It doesn't require you to bury the tach needle or lean over until the gas cap drags just to have a good time, and its modern good looks and rumbling vee-twin exhaust note just sweeten the deal. That's why I think that anyone who judges the Ascot by its lap times out on Racer Road might hit his apexes perfectly but misses the point of this bike by a mile. —*Paul Dean*

• The fraud-factor is high here. Vee-twin Ascots *look* like they're for riders more interested in where they're going than what they're sitting on to get there. Imagine strapping trunks, towels and an Igloo ice chest on the tail of a Bimota for a quick run to the waves and you get the picture. But put 'em on the Ascot and it couldn't seem more right.

Then there's the good part. While the Ascot looks like some kind of two-wheeled CJ5, neat but still a Jeep, only you know the truth. From the saddle, you know this 411-pound faker will surprise some low-bar and rearset-equipped riders on that twisty stretch heading down to the beach. Then comes the best part: While you're unloading the Igloo and grabbing for the Coppertone, as casually as possible you ask, "Were you guys *really* racing?" —*Joe Kress*

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Honda VT500 Ascot — street

IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company Inc., 100 West Alondra Boulevard, Gardena, California 90247

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $2298

ENGINE

Type . . . liquid-cooled four-stroke 52 degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement . . . . . single overhead camshafts, three valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 71.0mm x 62.0mm
Displacement 490.9cc
Compression ratio 10.5:1
Engine redline . . . . . 9500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . two 32mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . .wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . .transistorized, battery-powered
Charging system . . . . . .12-volt; 370-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 12-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 1.763:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-jackshaft drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 0.912:1 ratio
Jackshaft-to-driveshaft drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 1.266:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 3.182:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.857	18.499	4.19
II	1.947	12.607	6.15
III	1.545	10.004	7.75
IV	1.280	8.288	9.36
V	1.074	6.954	11.15
VI	0.866	5.607	13.83

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter/ 6.1 in. (154mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Showa shocks, 5-position adjustable spring preload/4.3 in. (109mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . .single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.5-in. (293mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front . . . . . .3.50S18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless
Rear . . . . . .4.25S18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G504 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

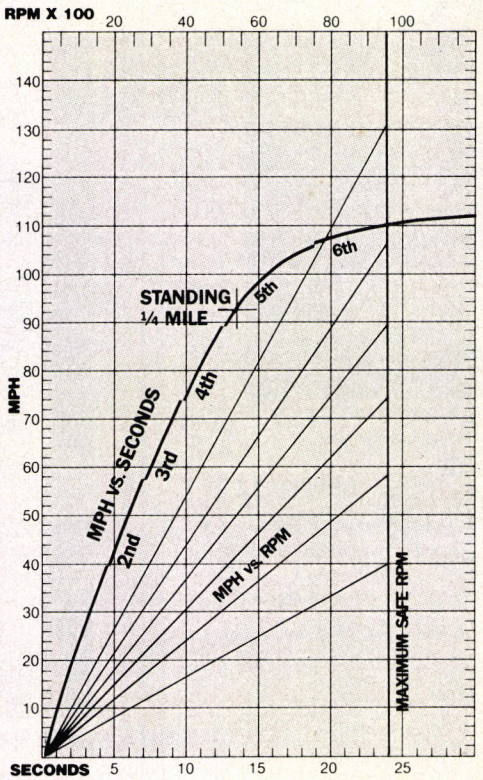
Weight . . . . . .411 lbs. (186.4kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 45.7% front, 54.3% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 810 lbs. (367kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 383 lbs. (174kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . .58.4 in. (1484mm)
Seat height . . . . . .31.3 in. (795mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . .29.9 in. (760mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . .13.5 in. (344mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . .7.2 in. (182mm), at centerstand
Steering head angle . . . . . 31.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . .5.75 in. (146mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.2 qt. (3.0*l*)
Fuel tank . . . . . .steel, 2.5 gal. (9.5*l*), including 0.4 gal. (1.5*l*) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . .41 to 61 mpg (17 to 16 km/*l*)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . .51 mpg (22 km/*l*)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 103 to 153 miles (166 to 246km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . .16 to 24 miles (26 to 39km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 28 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 50 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 13.628 sec., 93.75 mph (151 km/h)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 112 mph (151 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 32 ft. (9.8m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 129 ft. (39.3m)

WARRANTY: 12 months unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Candy Red, Pearl Blue



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty

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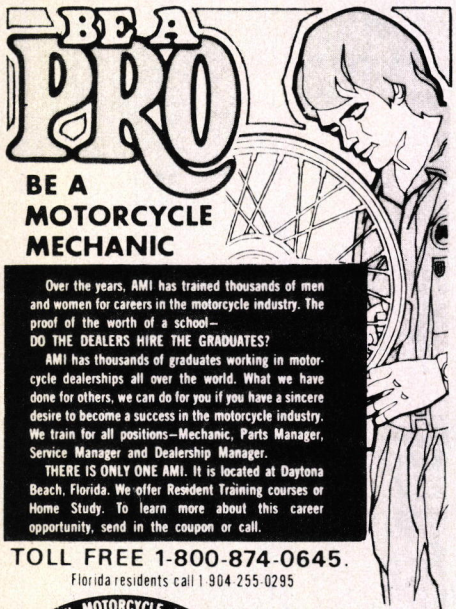

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

GSM Sport Rack

Cargo capacity for the minimalist.

• Sportbike style and luggage racks, traditionally, have been almost mutually exclusive. Most available cargo-platforms were too big for the trim tail-sections on a sportbike, or too ugly, or both. But GSM has addressed that problem with its new line of Sport Racks, designed specifically for sportbike use. The approach is to integrate the carrier with the bike's bodywork, making the rack as unobtrusive as possible when it's not in use. The trade off is obvious; such an inconspicuous unit can't be very large.

The Sport Rack is made of welded steel tubing, with a black epoxy-paint finish. Each rack is furnished with mounting hardware specific to its designated model. However, when we fitted the appropriate rack to a GPz550, two of the four bolts supplied were too short. Given the right hardware, though, installation on the Kawasaki is a 10-minute job; remove the stock grabrail and bolt up the Sport Rack in its place.

Once the rack was mounted, comments were divided about equally between: 1) "Sure looks nice for a luggage rack," and 2) "Sure is small for a luggage rack." But within the limits of the available loading area, which varies by model, the Sport Rack works well. It's stout, well-finished and makes a handy platform for books, beach towels, a lunchbox or any similarly sized load, freeing up seat space for larger baggage—or human cargo. Plus, the unloaded Sport Rack won't make your bike resemble an empty flatbed truck.

Sport Racks are available for Honda's Nighthawk, Sabre, Interceptor and most F-models, Kawasaki's KZ and GPz-series, Suzuki's GS-line, Yamaha Secas and for the Honda XL250 and 500 singles. The racks list for $49.95 and are available through GSM, Dept. CG, 13026 Raymer St., North Hollywood, California, 91605; U.S. (800) 423-2302, CA (800) 232-2379. —*T.J. Rafferty*

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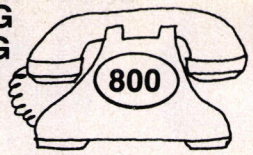

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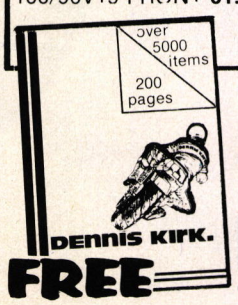

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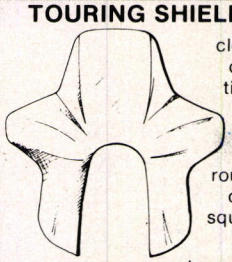

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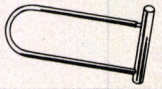

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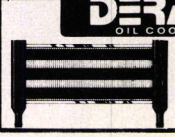

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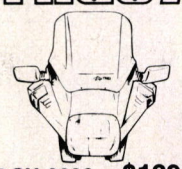

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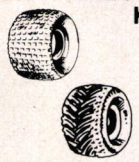

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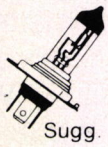

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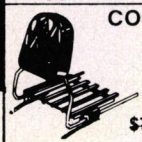

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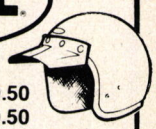

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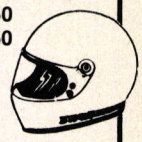

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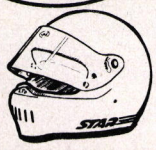

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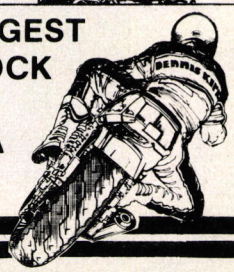

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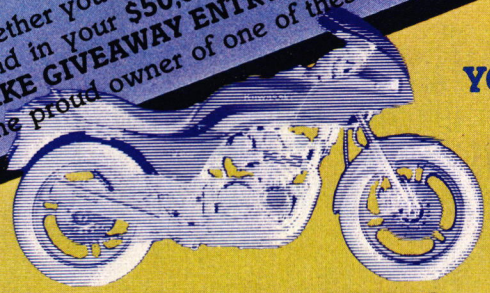

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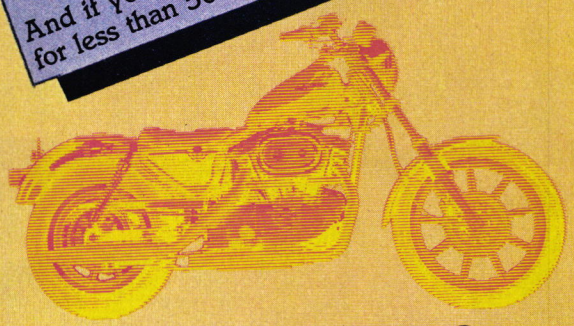

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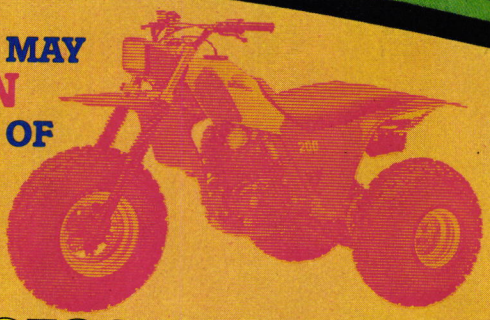

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Three countries duel in the American desert.

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COMPARISON DESERT TEST:

Honda XR500R vs. Husqvarna 500 XC vs.

BY RON LAWSON

You can't fight the desert. Racers discovered long ago that conventional weaponry is hopelessly inadequate against the Mojave. In the cruel environment of a western wilderness race, a rider on an undersuspended enduro bike or a four-speed motocrosser stands less chance than a snowball in Baja; that kind of machinery simply isn't versatile enough for sand survival.

But there is a breed of motorcycle that can come to terms with the desert rather than fight it, one that is capable of changing with the desert's many moods. For now, the breed is rare, but its members include the Honda XR500R, the Husqvarna 500 XC and the Maico 490 Sand Spider. These three machines take wildly different approaches to the same problem, but make no mistake about it—this is the cream of the cactus crop.

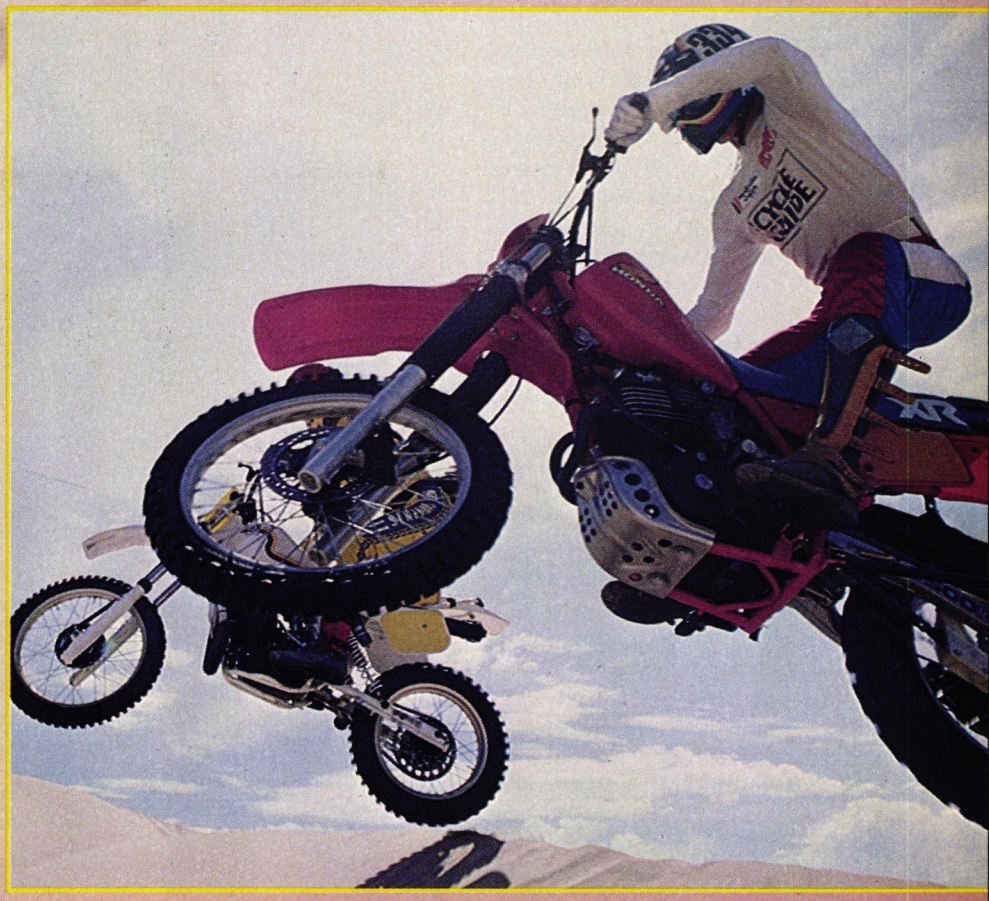
For example, the 500 XC is the latest in a long line of Husqvarna's acknowledged desert masters. But the XC is more than that, it's a multi-talented motorcycle, used for everything from motocross to playriding. And that versatility makes the XC Husqvarna's best-selling model, even in areas of the country where the closest thing to desert is a grassy clearing in a rain forest. And the Husky is far from alone in the desert. This year Honda has put together a race team that has managed to win almost every major point-to-point race, including the Baja 1000 and the Parker 400. And all this has been done from the seat of an XR500R—a four-stroke that might otherwise be considered only a playbike for the masses.

And even though the Maico Sand Spider 490 hasn't won any big races and has no reputation as a prince of puckerbushes, the machine is a serious effort at taming the desert. Like the others, it has abilities that allow it to excel in virtually any kind of off-road endeavor.

With all three of these machines, those abilities start with an affinity for speed; there's not a head-nodder in the crowd. These are three motorcycles that make wide expanses seem small through their exceptional stability and appetite for gobbling up the miles. And at the top of the stability chart stands the Husqvarna, a machine that tracks straight ahead like

a bike with a mission. The XC does nothing more than flinch slightly and continue on its path when it encounters rocks and ruts that, by all rights, should result in an instant get-off.

Naturally, that stability extracts a price in agility when it comes time to dodge puckerbushes and cacti. Quick movements have to be planned ahead rather than on impulse. Husqvarna MX riders know the technique well. But on a racetrack, few turns come as a surprise, so an MX rider can set up for his moves in advance. In the desert, it takes a quick-thinking rider to summon the required effort in the split-second available to avoid a sudden obstacle.



If you jump right off of the Husky and onto the Honda, you're in for a surprise. Only a fraction of the effort needed to turn the Husky is necessary on the XR. The Honda has less rake, less trail and a shorter wheelbase, so it changes course almost automatically as you weave your way through the desert. Of the three bikes, the Honda is by far the easiest to maneuver, despite being the heaviest. But input from rough terrain affects the Honda's steering just as quickly as input from the rider, and so a sharp bump can make the XR change direction more easily than it would the XC. Even at low speeds, like in the confines of a tight sand wash, the steep steering-head angle can cause trouble by giving the front wheel a tendency to knife under.

Steering-wise, the Maico lies somewhere between the ultra-quick Honda and the ultra-slow Husky, one reason it gets the award for best-steering bike of

Continued

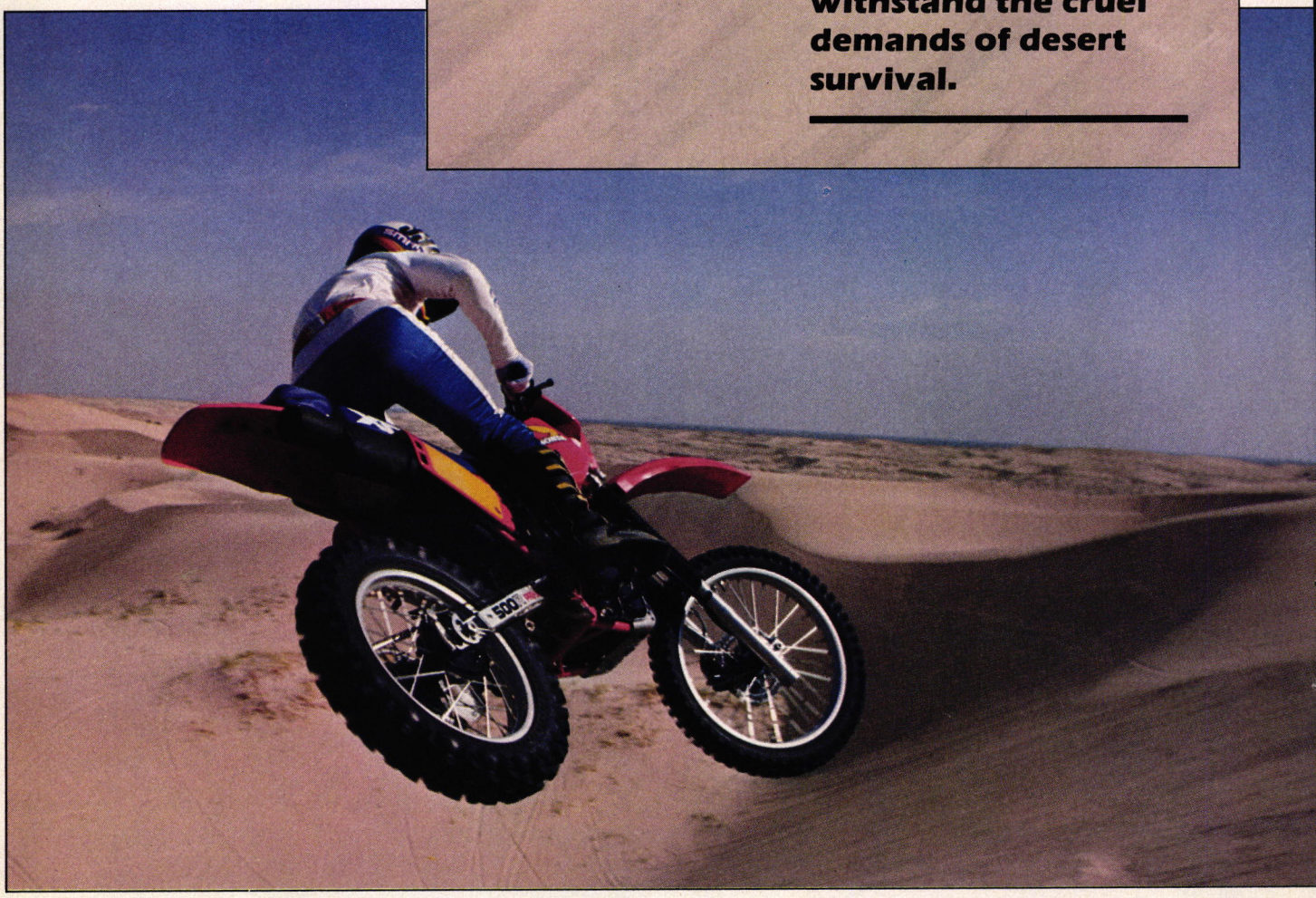
Maico 490 Sand Spider

the three. Like the XC, the Sand Spider was derived from a motocrosser, and Maico MXers have always been known for their easy-to-ride characteristics. The same formula works in the desert. The Maico strikes a compromise between rock-steady stability and cat-like quickness through wide-open stretches, tight washes and almost any condition you'll encounter in the desert.

There is one condition, though, where the Husky holds a clear advantage: deep, sandy whoops. The XC has the only twin-shock rear suspension of the trio, but that system offers the best behavior. It soaks up the whoops and bumps without help from linkages or adjusters, instead relying on Husqvarna's patented Immediate Track Control (ITC), a shock system that increases both compression and rebound damping during the final one-third of wheel travel. ITC works with progressively wound springs on the Ohlins shocks to smooth out the sharp stutter-bumps as well as cushion the deep whoops.

In those same whoops, the XC's fork seems about as efficient as the rear end. But over smaller ripples, the Husky's fork is less-compliant than those on the other two bikes. It feels harsh even

Only a hearty breed of motorcycle can withstand the cruel demands of desert survival.



though it easily strokes through all of its travel on medium and large impacts.

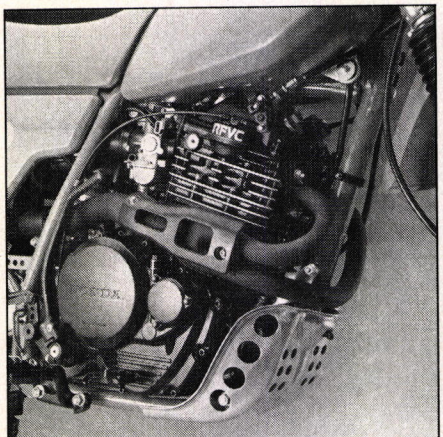
The Honda's suspension situation is a reversal of the Husky's—the front performs better than the rear. Under most circumstances the fork provides a smooth but slightly soft ride. In *really* rough territory, though, the Honda has trouble keeping up with the Husky, chiefly because the XR's rear end isn't as effective. Part of the problem can be traced to the XR's weight, which is, after all, more than 30 pounds greater than the Husky's or the Maico's; and while that weight rarely is evident on twisty trails, it's undeniable in the rough stuff. Carrying extra weight through killer whoops is simply going to wear down a rider.

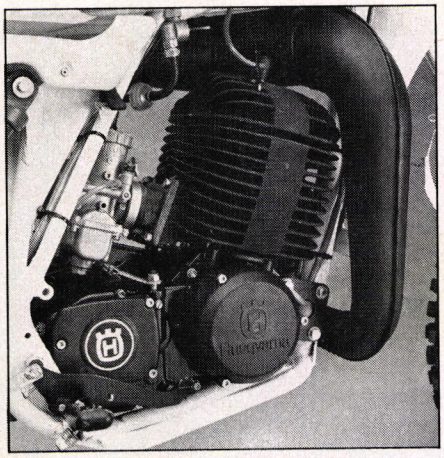
Middle-of-the-road honors once again fall on the Maico when the suspension ballots are counted. The rear end isn't quite as good as the Husky's and the fork isn't as plush as the Honda's, but on both counts the Maico comes close. And on lightly rippled terrain, the Sand Spider's overall ride is the best of the lot. That isn't suprising when you consider how much suspension travel the machine has at each end. With 12 inches up front and 12.7 inches in the back, the Sand Spider even out-travels most motocrossers. But when tight trails are the order of the day, all that travel gives the Maico an uncertain, spongy feel as the front end dives and the rear squats every time you roll on or off the throttle. We eliminated much of the problem by switching from 10W to SAE15 fork oil and by setting the Ohlins shock on the fourth-slowest of its 44 rebound-damping positions. We also ran about four pounds of air pressure in the fork, while the other bikes used no air.

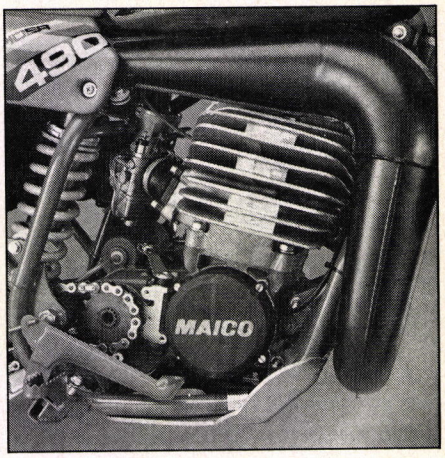
When properly set-up, the Maico can keep the Husky in sight through the whoops, and stay with the Honda through twisty trails. But when it comes to power, the Maico rider never has to worry about keeping up, because he's way in front. The Sand Spider will stretch your wrists as well as its lead over the other two machines any time the throttle is opened. The top end, pipe and ignition all are identical to those on the MX version, but, inexplicably, our test bike was much more powerful than the motocrosser we tested in our May Open-class shootout. Write it off to assembly-line inconsistency if you wish, but this is the most powerful Maico we've tested.

All that muscle is more than just top-end, flat-out-across-a-dry-lake power, too. It hits hard and low, staying strong all the way up to a violent top-end knockout punch. In fact, the Maico produces so much power that it can be hard to control, and the internal-rotor ignition doesn't help. There isn't much flywheel effect, so a touch too much throttle can send the bike sliding sideways off a trail; and closing the throttle at low rpm is an invitation to a stalled motor. So at times, the Maico can be downright frustrating on a twisty fireroad, where the soft suspension and light flywheel make it hard to hold a consistent line.

Consistency is much easier on the Husky. It doesn't impress you with desert-pounding pulsations of power, but the delivery of that power is smooth and predictable. In fact, compared to the Maico, the XC is so smooth and predictable it seems slow. Sure, the Husky is a powerful machine in its own right, one that can conquer any hill in its path, but the Maico can make easy work of every other machine in its class. And where the Maico has not enough flywheel, the Husky has too much. That can be a slight advantage in situations where delicate throttle control is necessary,

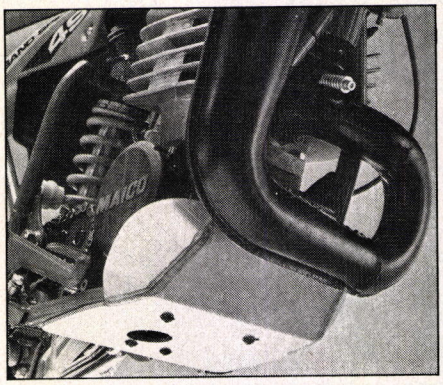






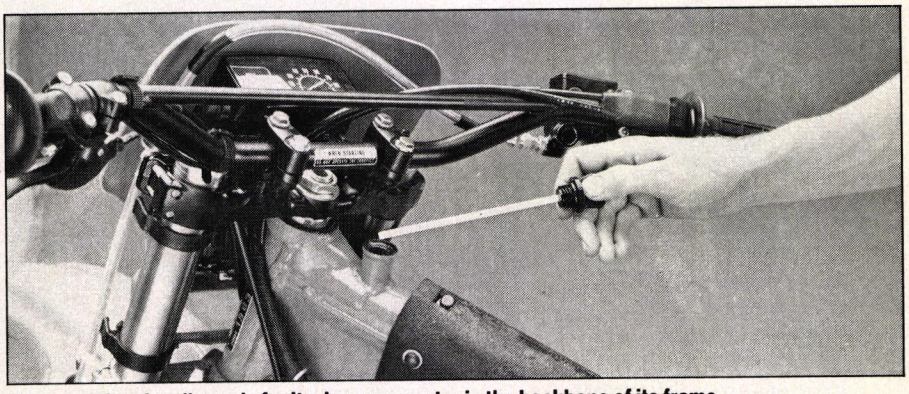
Japan, Sweden and Germany represent three opposing philosophies in the approach to all-out desert warfare

Honda believes in the four-stroke, Husqvarna believes in the two-stroke, and Maico just believes in horsepower.



Sand Spider's anti-rock armor

Defense from the enemy below.



Honda carries the oil supply for its dry-sump motor in the backbone of its frame

And it has a built-in spinal tap for checking the state of the engine's health.

Continued

such as in off-camber turns and through rocky ravines. But in most circumstances the Husky's slow throttle response just makes the machine feel cumbersome.

At first we had a tendency to blame the condition on the Husky's spark arrestor, which, aside from the external-rotor ignition, is the only powerband-affecting change between the 500 XC and the 500 CR motocrosser. But even with the spark arrestor removed, the machine feels corked-up. So the arrestor is best left in place, although it must be cleaned frequently because the packing from the silencer tends to break loose and clog it.

There's a removable baffle in the Honda also, but it has a much greater power-damping effect than did the Husky's spark arrestor. We left the baffle out through most of the test since without it, a spark still is unlikely to escape the Honda's muffler, and since the bike's exhaust note isn't much louder with it removed. But even *without* the baffle, the Honda was down on power compared to the other two bikes. We couldn't devise a roll-on dragrace in which the Maico didn't leave the Honda far behind—not, that is, until we put both machines in fifth gear, rolled along at 5 mph and then opened both throttles. Then, the Honda nudged ahead only momentarily, until the Maico blasted by.

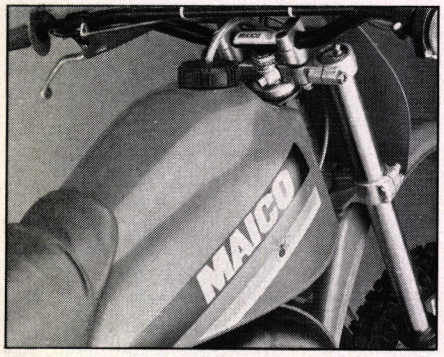
Every bit of the Honda's power connects with the desert floor, though. The Honda has neither the Maico's tendency for wheelspin, nor the Husky's reluctance to rev freely. And if the two-strokes can climb some monster hill, so can the Honda, because the XR compensates for much of its power deficit with tractability. In fact, that tractability makes the Honda by far the easiest and most fun machine to ride of the three. Honda's goal was to make a four-stroke powerplant with all the advantages of both worlds; power at low *and* high rpm. And so a new approach was in order.

One technical avenue Honda took was a true hemispherical combustion chamber for more-efficient fuel-burning. Thus the combustion chamber has no flat areas, even where the valves seat. The XR also has two carburetors working with a progressive linkage that opens the left carb first and then the right one when the throttle is about one-third open. Honda claims that because each carb has a small venturi (26mm), better atomization of fuel can take place; and that low-rpm throttle response is better with just one small carb in operation, yet the two carbs combined still can pass enough volume to feed the big single at high rpm.

Nonetheless, Honda wasn't successful at making the XR as fast as its two-stroke competition. Top speed on the XR is 86 mph, while the Husqvarna, with its six-speed gearbox, can touch 100. The Maico tops out around 95 mph in fifth gear, but it easily would go faster with taller gearing, while the others barely pull their top gears with the stock ratios.

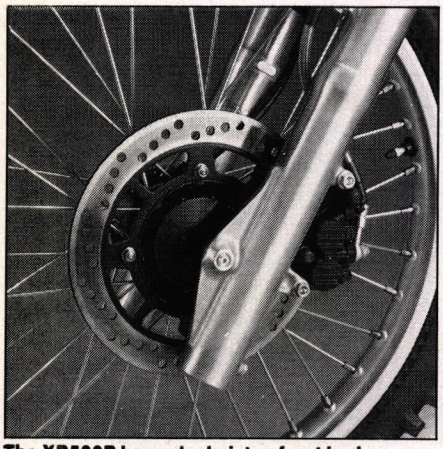
And, of course, top speeds around 100 are entirely within the realm of possibility during a point-to-point desert race. The Hondas that win such races have been modified—not radically, but enough to make up for that 10–15-mph deficit. Usually the changes just include a Mugen pipe, a vented airbox, regearing and perhaps the stiffer shock spring from the XR350. The changes that a Husky might undergo include the use of a 500 CR's muffler (with no spark arrestor). And if it's a race that includes night riding, the Husky would be better equipped with a 430 WR's SEM ignition and the Honda might be fitted with an XL600 ignition, both for better lighting.

Not enough Maicos have appeared in the desert yet to establish what kind of modifications might work best. But we



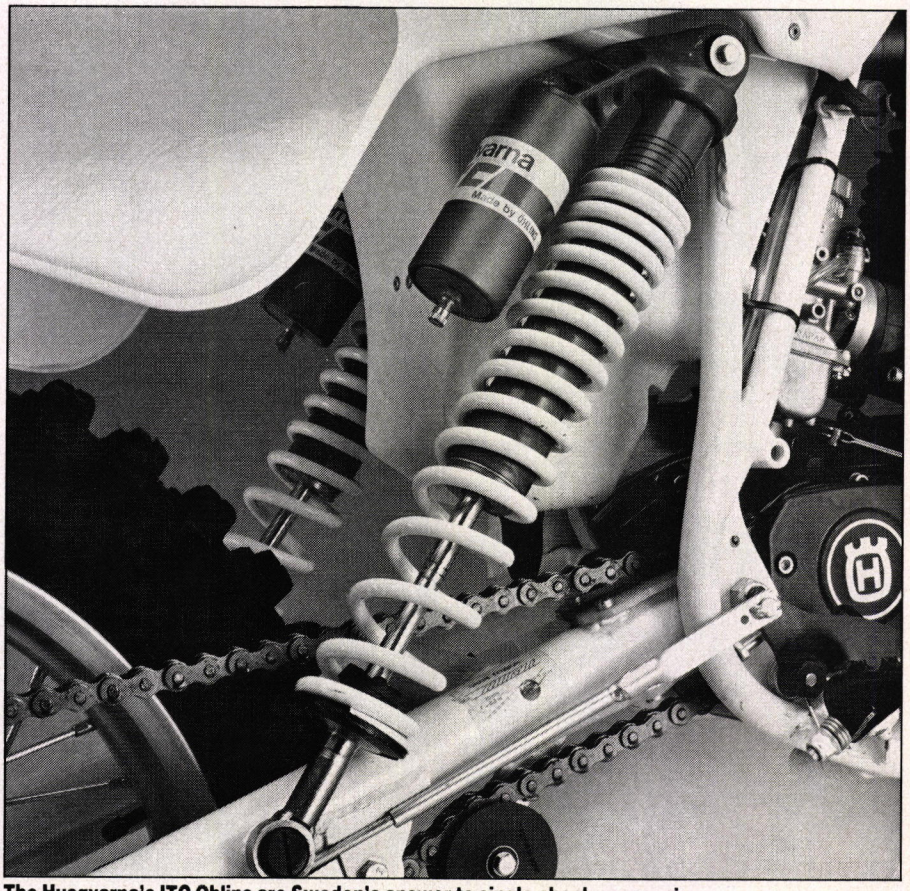
Maico fuel tank is American-made

Horsepower gives the 490 an appetite.



The XR500R has a dual-piston front brake

And it's the best of the dirt discs.



The Husqvarna's ITC Ohlins are Sweden's answer to single-shock suspension

And for now, at least, it's an answer that can't be knocked out of the desert.

Continued

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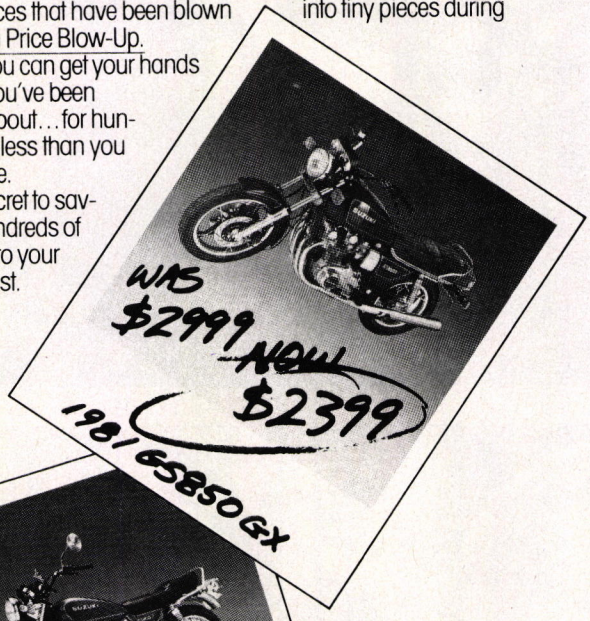

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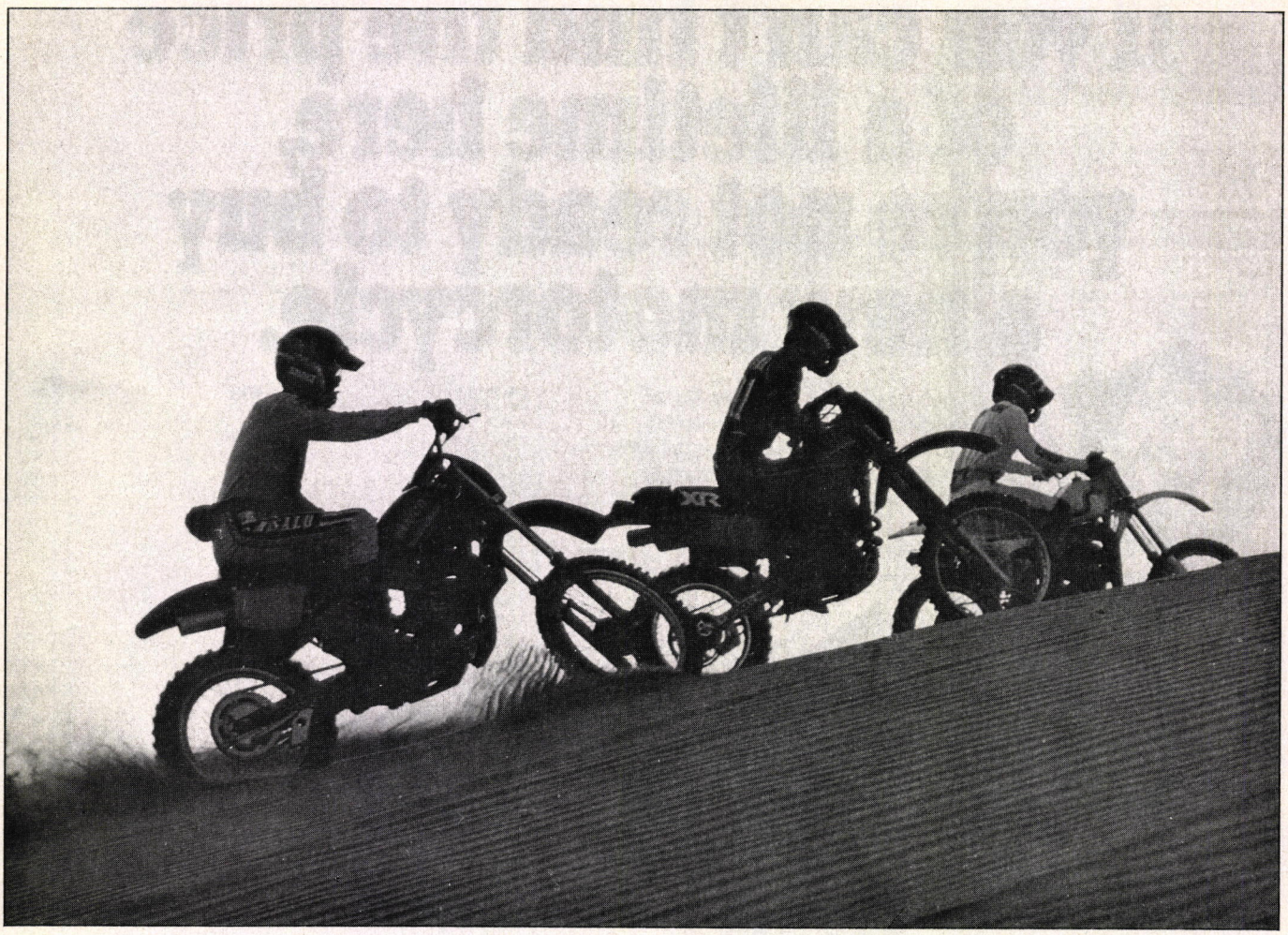

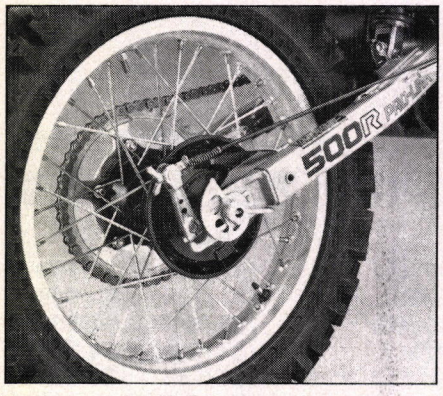

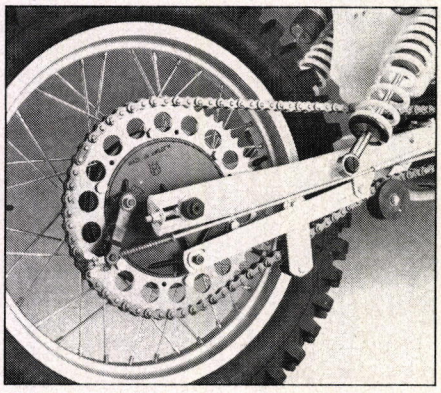

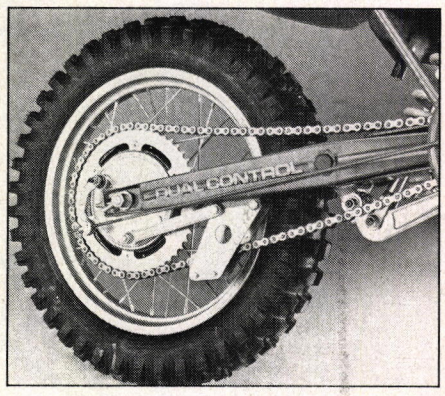

Honda rear wheel (left) is the easiest to remove of the three

But Husqvarna's aluminum rim locks mean XC flats are likely, and so is Swedish-wheel removal.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Wheel Travel, Front/Rear, in.	Weight (fuel tank empty), lb.	Weight bias, Front/ Rear, percent	Steering head angle/ Trail, degrees/inches	Transmission, number of speeds
Honda XR500R–'83	11.0/12.2	278	47.0/53.0	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 500 XC–'83	11.7/12.8	245	47.4/52.6	30.0/5.98	6
Maico 490 Sand Spider–'83	12.0/12.7	243	47.4/52.6	27.0/4.72	5
Honda CR480R–'83	12.0/12.3	226	48.5/51.5	28.0/3.86	5
KTM MC 495–'83	11.9/12.4	249	46.6/53.4	28.0/4.21	4
Yamaha TT600–'83	11.7/10.8	280	45.0/55.0	28.0/4.65	5

speculate that an external-rotor ignition and taller gearing would be a good starting point. But even more important would be careful bolt-by-bolt preparation. In addition, care must be taken to center both brake assemblies by applying pressure to the affected brake lever while tightening its axle and stay mounts—although the Maico's rear brake still will be grabby and the front brake weak. Conversely, other problems we encountered wouldn't have been prevented by even the most careful pre-race preparation. On the first day of the test, the Motoplat ignition went sour, and after three days, the clutch began slipping badly.

We didn't have such severe mechanical troubles with the Husky, but it was hardly free of aggravation. During the test, the Husky was the victim of six flat tires, most of which were attributable to Husqvarna's aluminum rim locks. The rubber flap that is supposed to keep the lock from rubbing against the inner tube comes unglued easily, and that makes for an instant flat. And the XC's brakes rated even worse than the Maico's, because they require too much force. Husqvarna has an optional brake shoe made of a material that provides stronger braking, but is less resistant to water-induced fade. Fair-weather desert riders will be better off using the optional shoes, which are standard on the MXers.

Another Husky stumbling-block is vibration. That might not seem like such a big deal to hardened dirt-bikers, but keep in mind that these machines are designed to be run at high rpm for hours on end. And after five minutes of that, the XC can put your fingers to sleep; 10 minutes and the buzzing footpegs can have your feet ready to start walking.

Vibration and braking problems won't be among the Honda rider's worries, though. In fact, the XR brakes are the best of the bunch. A 226mm-diameter hydraulic disc brake does the job in front, and so far it's the best of the dirt discs. The only trouble came when some air got into the line because the bike fell over, making for a spongy-feeling lever. After a few minutes of riding, though, the brake returned to normal. But one thing that won't get better with more riding is the rear tire, which wore with alarming speed. Part of the blame falls, again, to the weight of the machine, part to the rear wheel's 17-inch diameter. And when you make a trip to the dealer for a re-

Ride Review

• The fastest way between two puckerbushes is definitely in a straight line aboard Maico's Sand Spider. The big, red sled has more horsepower and better suspension than either the Husky or the Honda. It even steers pretty well, too. But for all its winning ways I'd never buy the Maico.

After days in the desert I realized that I was out there for fun, not trophies. And once I'd admitted that serious racing was secondary, the Maico lost some of its appeal. Its light-flywheeled motor was almost a hindrance at everyday play speeds. And with the throttle not on WFO, the excellent suspension didn't seem to be as much of an advantage.

That's when I decided that the Honda, warts and all, would be my ideal desert bike. I know it doesn't have the top speed of the two-strokes and that it's on the porky side. But neither of those things matter unless you are riding at ten-tenths. In most situations the XR is fast enough, and it has enough torque to make riding simple. The plush suspension also makes eight-tenths racing soft work. And at any speed the steering is light and precise. Okay, it's not the fastest way between two puckerbushes, but for me the Honda's way is certainly the easiest. —*David Dewhurst*

• Someone ought to straighten out the highly confused Mr. Lawson. Someone ought to inform him that the Husky *has* to be the best desert bike, seeing as how it has virtually dominated the sport for so long. He also needs to be reminded that Maicos are for shooting berms, not for dodging puckerbushes.

Yep, someone ought to tell him that, all right. But it's not going to be me. Because for what *I* call desert riding, the Maico is my favorite, too.

Now, I fully acknowledge that the Husky is more stable than either the Maico or the Honda when bounding over the whoops at top-gear speeds. And I won't argue that the Honda is the most nimble and controllable in the confines of a narrow sand wash or along a tight trail. But in between those extremes—which comprises the vast majority of my desert riding—the Maico is a delight. Its steering is crisp, its long suspension irons out the wrinkles in the desert floor, and its motor sends me straight to horsepower heaven.

So, even though I realize just *suggesting* that a Maico is a better desert machine than a Husky is liable to result in a lynch mob on my front lawn, I'm sticking to my guns. Including the ones I keep right next to the front door.—*Paul Dean*

Continued

placement tire, you'll find there isn't much of a selection. Husqvarnas used 17-inch rear wheels until this year, but they now wear 18-inchers, primarily because Husky owners complained of too few choices in replacement rubber.

That's one thing Husqvarna has learned from its years of experience in the desert. But experience wasn't enough to make the Husky a sure winner in this test. In fact, none of these machines is a *sure* winner. Each bike is capable of desert survival, but each tackles the problem in a wildly different way—with a very distinct set of advantages and flaws. The Husky holds the best hand in rough, whooped-out terrain, but is the most difficult and uncomfortable to ride. The Honda is comfortable, mild and easy to ride, but it's also underpowered and undersuspended. Then there's the Maico, which is anything *but* mild, and is overpowered and oversuspended.

But we're talking about racing here; and in a race, where performance is everything, too much is better than not enough. That's why the Maico has to be called the winner. It certainly seems strange that, of these three firms, the only one that hasn't built itself a name for winning desert races is the one that builds the best desert racer. But it's a fact. The win records of the Honda and the Husky might look appealing at a glance, but in the desert, you can't always believe your eyes. ●

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Honda XR500R

IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company Inc.,
100 West Alondra Boulevard, Gardena, California 90247

RETAIL PRICE: $2298

ENGINE

Type	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves
Bore and stroke	92.0mm x 75.0mm
Displacement	498.6cc
Compression ratio	9.2:1
Carburetion	two 26mm Keihin slide/needle
Air filter	dual-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication	dry sump
Starting system	primary kick
Ignition	flywheel-magneto CDI
Charging system	none; direct AC lighting

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive	straight-cut gears; 2.226:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Final drive	#520 O-ring chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.429:1 (48/14) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.462	18.790	4.03
II	1.647	12.570	6.04
III	1.250	9.540	7.94
IV	1.000	7.632	9.93
V	0.840	6.411	11.82

SUSPENSION/ WHEEL TRAVEL

Front	Showa air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter/ 11.0 in. (279mm)
Rear	single Showa shock, 12-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 12mm spring preload range/12.2 in. (310mm)

BRAKES

Front	single-action hydraulic caliper, 8.9-in. (226mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front	3.00-21 IRC Volcanduro VE-32
Rear	5.10-17 IRC Volcanduro VE-31

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight	278 lbs. (126.1kg)
Weight distribution	47.0% front, 53.0% rear
Wheelbase	56.6 to 57.6 in. (1437 to 1464mm)
Seat height	37.3 in. (948mm)
Handlebar width	32.7 in. (830mm)
Footpeg height	16.6 in. (422mm)
Ground clearance	13.6 in. (345mm), at frame crossmember
Steering head angle	25.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	3.94 in. (100mm)
Frame	tubular mild steel, single front downtube
Oil capacity	2.1 qt. (2.0/)
Fuel tank	plastic, 2.1 gal. (12.0/), including 0.7 gal. (2.5/) reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, tripmeter resettable in tenths

PERFORMANCE Top speed (observed) 86 mph (138 km/h)

WARRANTY: 90 days

AVAILABLE COLOR: red only

Husqvarna 500 XC

Husqvarna Motor Corporation,
4935 Mercury Street, San Diego, California 92111

$2985

Type ..... two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement ..... one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one exhaust
Bore and stroke ..... 86.0mm x 84.0mm
Displacement 487.9cc
Compression ratio (uncorrected) 9.5:1
Carburetion ..... one 40mm Mikuni slide/needle
Air filter ..... dual-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication ..... pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system ..... primary kick
Ignition ..... flywheel-magneto CDI
Charging system ..... none

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 1.795:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #520 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 4.077:1 (53/13) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.615	19.138	4.03
II	1.813	13.263	5.82
III	1.368	10.013	7.71
IV	1.043	7.636	10.11
V	0.880	6.439	11.99
VI	0.741	5.420	14.25

Front ..... Husqvarna air-spring, 40mm stanchion tube diameter/11.7 in. (298mm)
Rear ..... dual Ohlins shocks, 10-position adjustable spring preload/12.8 in. (326mm)

Front ..... drum, double-leading shoe
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

Front ..... 3.00-21 Trelleborg Deep Grip T544 Motocross
Rear ..... 5.00-18 Trelleborg Ten-Masters Motocross 744

Weight ..... 245 lbs. (111.1kg)
Weight distribution ..... 47.4% front, 52.6% rear
Wheelbase ..... 57.8 to 58.7 in. (1468 to 1491mm)
Seat height ..... 37.6 in. (956mm)
Handlebar width ..... 32.5 in. (825mm)
Footpeg height ..... 16.9 in. (430mm)
Ground clearance ..... 12.9 in. (328mm), at skid rail
Steering head angle ..... 30.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 5.98 in. (152mm)
Frame ..... tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank ..... aluminum, 3.3 gal. (12.5/), no reserve
Instrumentation ..... none

Top speed (observed) ..... 98 mph (158 km/h)

30 days on engine and frame only

white only

Maico 490 Sand Spider

Maico USA Inc., 1256 Progress Road, Suffolk, Virginia 23434

$2895

Type ..... two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement ..... one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one exhaust
Bore and stroke ..... 86.5mm x 83.0mm
Displacement 487.8cc
Compression ratio (uncorrected) 12.0:1
Carburetion ..... one 40mm Bing slide/needle
Air filter ..... dual-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication ..... pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system ..... primary kick
Ignition ..... internal-rotor magneto CDI
Charging system ..... none

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 2.129:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #520 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.467:1 (52/15) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.357	17.397	4.46
II	1.706	12.591	6.16
III	1.300	9.595	8.09
IV	1.045	7.716	10.05
V	0.840	6.200	12.51

Front ..... Maico air-spring, 41.5mm stanchion tube diameter/12.0 in. (305mm)
Rear ..... single Ohlins shock, 44-position simultaneously adjustable compression and rebound damping, 10mm spring preload range/12.7 in. (322mm)

Front ..... drum, single-leading shoe
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

Front ..... 3.00-21 Metzeler Motocross 3E
Rear ..... 4.50-18 Metzeler Motocross 4E

Weight ..... 243 lbs. (110.2kg)
Weight distribution ..... 47.4% front, 52.6% rear
Wheelbase ..... 58.8 to 59.9 in. (1493 to 1521mm)
Seat height ..... 38.7 in. (982mm)
Handlebar width ..... 32.9 in. (835mm)
Footpeg height ..... 16.3 in. (413mm)
Ground clearance ..... 11.7 in. (297mm), at shock linkage
Steering head angle ..... 27.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.72 in. (120mm)
Frame ..... tubular chromoly steel, double front downtubes
Fuel tank ..... plastic, 4.4 gal. (16.5/), including 1.1 gal. (4.0/) reserve
Instrumentation ..... none

Top speed (observed) ..... 93 mph (150 km/h)

none

red only

All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty

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All MAC exhaust systems feature a removable ALL METAL baffle. Optional competition baffle available.
MAC
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Black Ceramac is not a paint, but a unique aerospace coating. **Black Ceramac** is a composite of nickle sulfate, aluminum oxide, ceramic, frit and carbon that actually bonds to the INSIDE and OUTSIDE surface. **Black Ceramac** is cured at 1800°F; normal exhaust temperature of a motorcycle is 1100°F.

This Ultra Black finish is richer and more lustrous than black chrome, Kal Gard, B1*, or Ceramicoat 2500**. **Black Ceramac** is guaranteed not to burn off or discolor. In addition, it is impervious to battery acid and road grime, it simply wipes clean with a damp cloth.

Black Ceramac is a MAC Exclusive: exhaust systems are NOW AVAILABLE for all Twins (2 into 1/suggested retail $129.95) and 4 Cylinder bikes (4 into 1/suggested retail $159.95). Contact your local dealer or write MAC for additional information.

*Kerker trade name
**Supertrapp trade name.

MAC

EXHAUST SYSTEMS

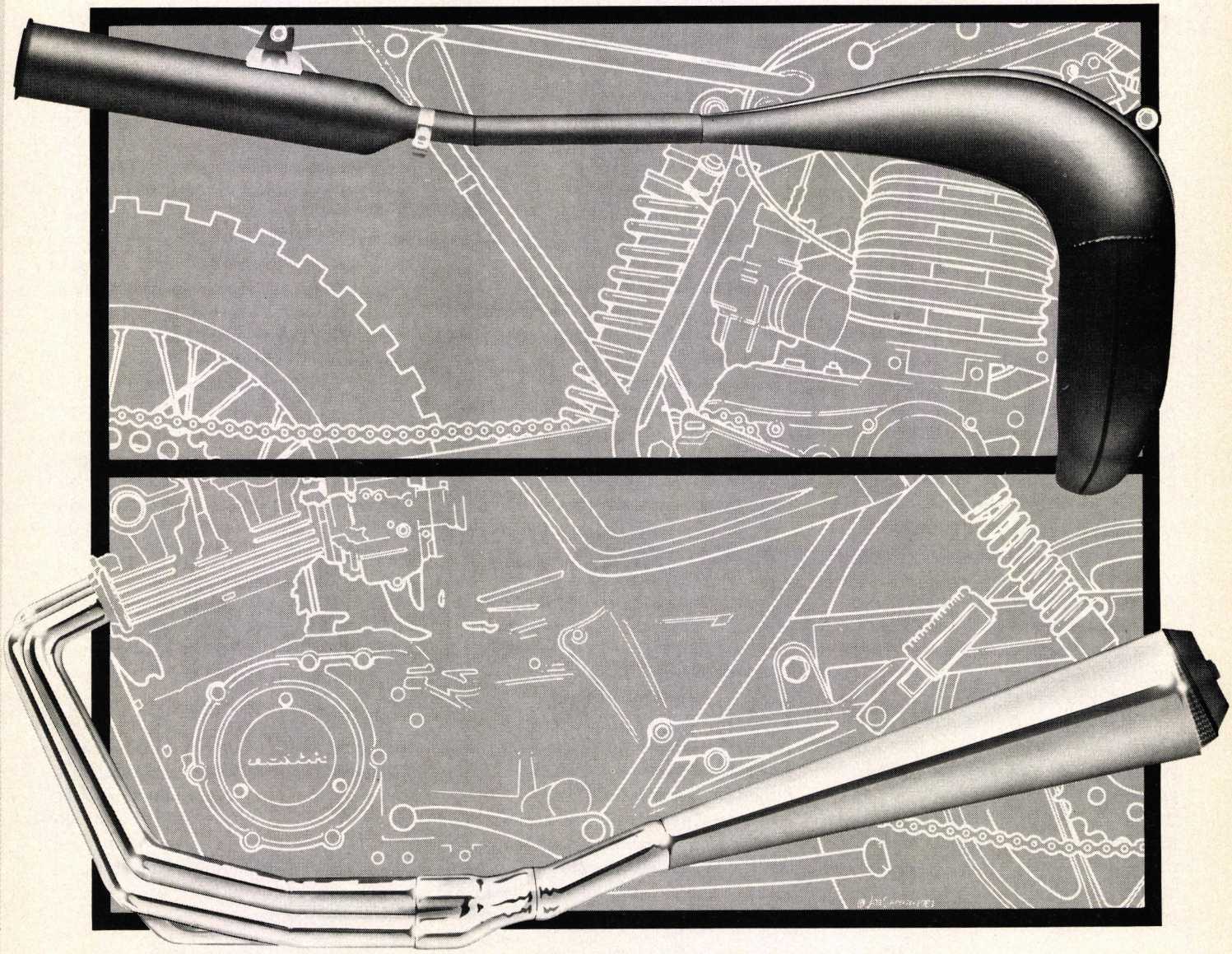
MAC PRODUCTS, 1410 Gaylord St., Long Beach, CA 90813
(213) 436-5462 (213) 436-9513

Cycle Guide's

SPECIAL EDITION:

Exhaust System Buyer's Guide

An exhaustively researched guide to buying street, dirt and racing exhaust systems and components.



EXHAUST SYSTEMS are among the most popular aftermarket accessories, and for good reason: Few other bolt-on components can have such a dramatic effect on performance and appearance, and *no* others, obviously, can change the sound that is so much of a bike's personality.

The promise of increased engine performance accounts for much of that popularity. Replacing an original-equipment exhaust with a properly designed accessory pipe can provide an instant, noticeable increase in horsepower. That improved performance generally is attained through a reduction of exhaust restriction by the use of larger-diameter header pipes, longer-radius bends or less-restrictive silencers.

One of the great untruths about exhausts, though, is that *any* aftermarket system will deliver that increased performance. Keep in mind that each stock exhaust system is the result of hundreds of hours of dynamometer testing, as well as countless miles of street/track evaluation, all in search of the best overall engine performance within legal sound and emission levels. Which is why improving on a stock system takes some doing, and why most of the more reputable pipebuilders are willing to provide comparative performance data to back up their claims. But be aware that the increased performances offered by aftermarket exhaust systems is not free. It virtually always results in a louder exhaust note. And while louder pipes might sound impressive, there's no guarantee that more noise will bring with it more performance; that racy exhaust note could add up to more sound than fury.

Also, even if you *do* get more peak power out of your engine by swapping exhaust systems, there's a distinct possibility that you'll lose power in some other area of performance. Changing an exhaust system's back-pressure to improve top-end power can also damage the low-end and mid-range performance, characteristics that might have been among the reasons you were attracted to the bike in the first place.

Those are not the only compromises you might have to face in a quest for more power through a change in exhaust plumbing. Some racing-style systems, for example, must be either loosened or removed entirely to allow access to the oil filter and drainplug. Others require permanent removal of the centerstand and/or passenger footpegs just to fit in place. Some systems will noticeably reduce a bike's all-important cornering clearance; and while a number of other pipes *will* increase cornering clearance, they'll do so at the expense of vertical ground clearance. Admittedly, not many of the systems on the market today will limit your motorcycle in all these ways, but you should investigatge these potential problems before you invest, especially if you plan on adding accessories such as saddlebags later on.

You also should investigate the effects your new exhaust system will have on carburetion, preferably before you buy it. Any change in exhaust-system tuning usually has a corresponding effect on airflow through the intake tract; thus, if you don't do the proper carburetor rejetting to correct the air/fuel ratio, the engine won't realize the performance potential built into the pipe. Worse yet, if the installation of an aftermarket pipe makes the fuel mixture *too* lean, the engine could sustain costly damage. Federal regulations prohibit dealers from making any engine changes—including carburetor rejetting—that can affect emissions on 1978 and later motorcycles, so don't expect the guy who sold you the pipe to also rejet your bike.

Those regulations don't apply to invididual owners, though, so there's little to stop you from doing your own rejetting. Before you can hope to accomplish that, however, you have to know how to read a sparkplug. But if plug-reading is a mystery to you, don't panic; most sparkplug manufacturers offer free brochures with color photos that detail exactly how to read plugs. Just remember always to begin rejetting with a mixture you know will be too rich, then gradually lean-out the jetting until you get the proper plug reading.

If it seems as if we're trying to steer you away from buying a new exhaust system, that's not the case. It's just that you can't make an intelligent choice if you don't know the problems you might encounter. Besides, there are just as many benefits offered by aftermarket pipes as there are cautions about them. And one of the biggest attractions of accessory exhaust systems is their lighter weight compared with OEM systems. Most aftermarket pipes are built with single-wall tubing rather than the double-wall stock used in almost all original-equipment systems, and consequently weigh considerably less, often as much as 20 pounds less. In addition, some systems save weight through the use of fewer mufflers, as in the case of replacing a four-into-two or four-into-four system with a four-into-one.

Altering or improving the appearance of your bike is yet another good reason to consider a new exhaust. Since a motorcycle's pipes and mufflers have such a dramatic effect on its styling, the wide variety of exhaust-system configurations available in the aftermarket offers numerous ways in which you can change your bike's personality. Anything from fish-tail extensions to baloney-cut mufflers is on the menu. And replacing rusted or dented pipes isn't nearly as costly if it's done with non-OEM equipment. An entire accessory exhaust, in fact, often costs less than just one side of the stock system.

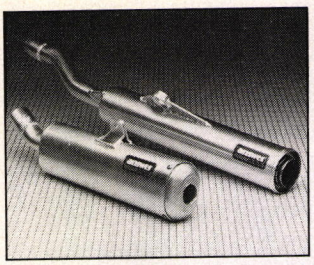
Don't, however, get *too* cost-conscious and lose sight of reality. The prospect of saving money through better fuel economy, for instance, is relatively slim, even though some pipe manufacturers offer models that do improve mileage ever so slightly. The promise of fewer trips to the pump should be only a minor consideration, though, since any reduction in gas consumption would be more than offset by the cost of the system.

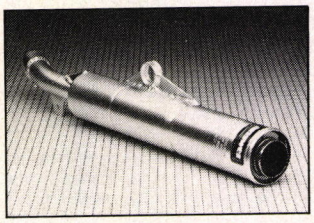
With so many factors to weigh when choosing an exhaust system, then, the only way to avoid a costly disappointment is to comparison-shop. Ask *lots* of questions. Once you've narrowed your choices down to a few different pipes, try to find some owners of the systems you're considering. Ask if they're pleased with their system and how well it's holding up. Find out if there were any installation problems or if the system's location made routine maintenance more difficult.

Also, visit some dealerships that carry the brands you're interested in buying. Ask to see the merchandise close up so you can check for sloppy welds, poor plating or other signs of low quality. And if possible, take a look at the mounting instructions for the pipe you're considering to insure that the instructions make sense and that all the pieces are present and accounted for. After all, the wrong time to discover that everything you need isn't in the box is after you've paid your money.

To help you in your quest for the perfect pipe, we've assembled the following catalog of exhaust systems available in the U.S. But use it only as a starting point, not as you sole source of information. Remember, it's *caveat emptor* out there, so know which pipe you want and why before you press exchequer into the parts man's palm.

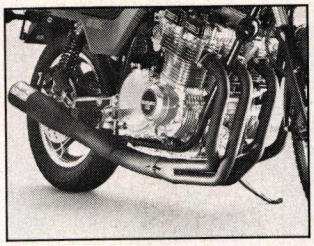
SPECIAL EDITION: EXHAUST SYSTEMS

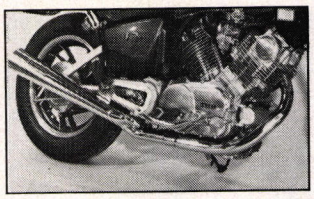




Answer Products
27967 Beale Court
Valencia, California 91355
(805) 257-4411
Catalog: Free

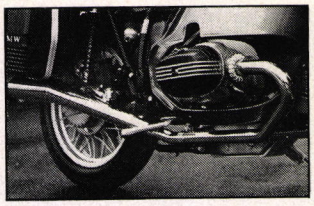
Answer Products manufactures a complete line of aluminum silencers, spark arrestor/silencers and add-on spark arrestors for most popular off-road machines. All spark arrestors are U.S.F.S. approved, with suggested retail prices ranging from $27.95 for the add-on type, to $59.95-$74.95 for complete bolt-on units. Suggested retail prices for silencers range from $46.95 to $59.95 for the standard round units, while the new, oval aluminum Eliminator mufflers go for $54.95 to $64.95, depending on the model. Repacking kits ($5.95) and replacement parts also are available.

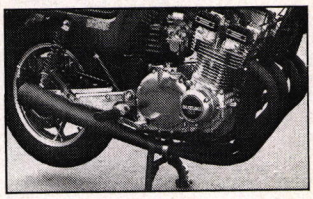




Bassani Manufacturing
3726 East Mira Loma
Anaheim, California 92806
(714) 630-1821 or (800) 854-6228
Catalog: Free

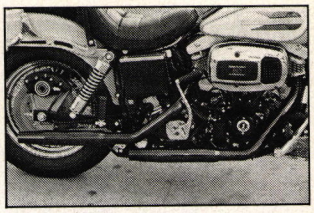
Bassani Manufacturing offers pipes for most street and off-road motorcycles. The Super Bike Pipe (pictured) features a flat-black, plasma-coated aluminum finish, requires centerstand removal, and has a suggested retail price of $265. Bassani street systems include four-into-one and four-into-two models for most Japanese fours, and a two-into-one pipe for Yamaha vee-twins. The Yamaha Virago system shown retails for $120. Slip-fit replacement mufflers also are available for installation on most stock head pipes. Yamaha and Kawasaki two-stroke street systems are available in a black plasma-coated aluminum finish. All systems feature a repackable fiberglass core.

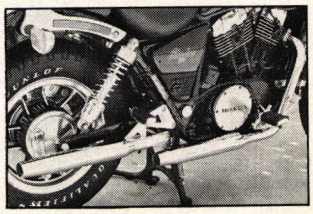




Bub Enterprises
785 East Brokaw Road
San Jose, California 95112
(408) 298-2826
Catalog: $3

Bub Enterprises builds exhaust systems for most Japanese models, Harley-Davidsons, BMWs, Triumphs, BSAs, Nortons, Moto Guzzis, Moto Morinis and Ducatis. A wide selection of replacement mufflers also are available for adapting to stock or Bub head pipes. Pictured is the two-into-two system for all /5 and /7 series BMWs. This system is claimed to improve low-end and mid-range torque and has a suggested retail price of $265 for chrome-finish and $235 for black. Most of the four-into-one pipes, like the Suzuki model shown, retail for $190 for black and $200 for chrome. This particular model restricts access to the oil filter. Replacement mufflers's suggested retail prices range from $110 to $150, depending on model and finish desired.





Cycle Shack Inc.
1104 San Mateo Ave.
South San Francisco,
California 94080
(415) 583-7014
Catalog: $3

Cycle Shack specializes in custom-style replacement mufflers and exhaust systems for most Harley-Davidson models, many Honda and Yamaha customs, and some Triumphs. A complete line of mufflers and drag pipes for Harley-Davidsons are available in a black-chrome finish. The FX/FXE pipes (shown) with 2-inch tapered mufflers have a suggested retail price of $137. The Staggered Duals for the Honda Shadow VT750 also feature tapered mufflers and retail for $125 per set. Cycle Shack also offers Yamaha 750 and 920 Virago riders a choice of three custom-styled staggered dual systems, either in black chrome or bright chrome for $105 to $115.

Continued

RACING, STREET, OR DIRT CHAIN KOTE IS THE ULTIMATE

Motorcyclists and racing teams who really know lubrication recognize that Chain Kote's unique blend of Molybdenum, a deep penetrant and a high viscosity bonding agent, is truly the ultimate in chain lubrication and protection.

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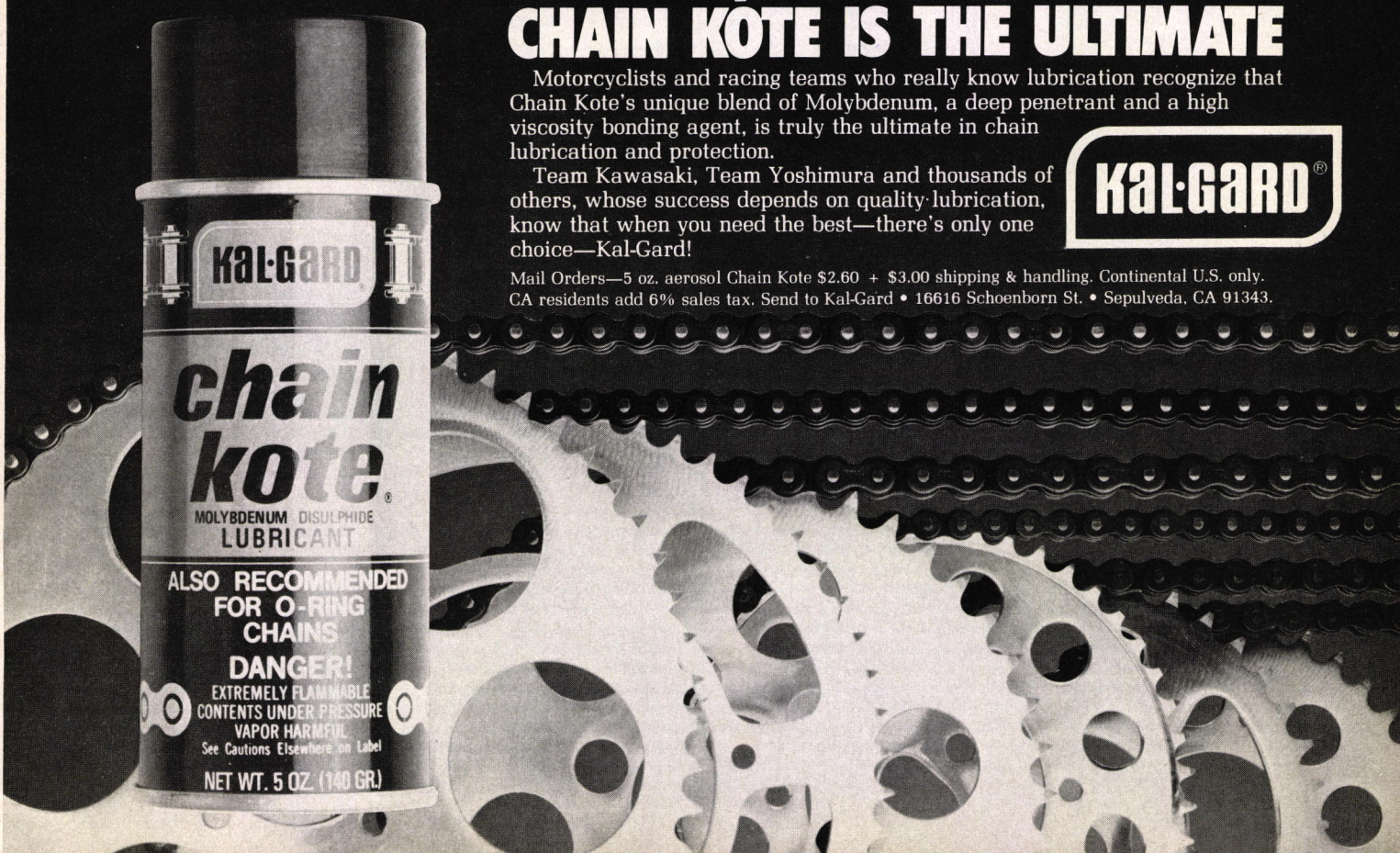
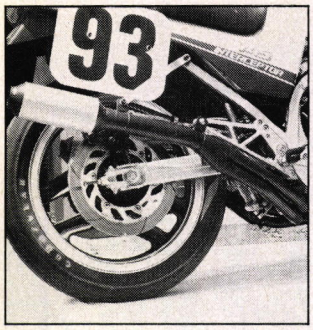
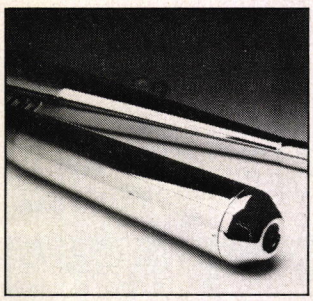
Mail Orders—5 oz. aerosol Chain Kote $2.60 + $3.00 shipping & handling. Continental U.S. only. CA residents add 6% sales tax. Send to Kal-Gard • 16616 Schoenborn St. • Sepulveda, CA 91343.

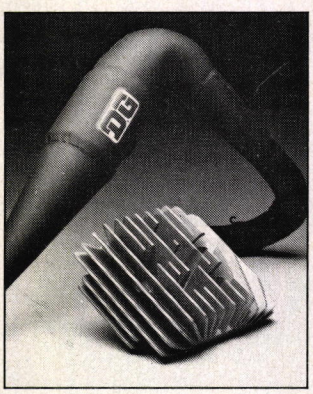




D&D Exhaust Systems
East Coast Cycle Supply
1011 North Dixie Highway
Pompano, Florida 33060
(305) 785-1180
Information available

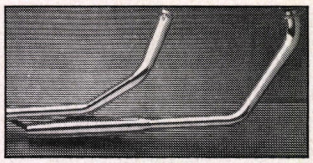
East Coast Cycle Supply offers D&D's racing exhaust system for Honda's V45 Interceptor. These pipes are claimed to produce 14 horsepower over the stock exhaust system, and to be lighter, as well. The D&D pipes allow access to the oil filter and drain plug, don't require removal of the centerstand, and the baffles can be repacked. Suggested retail price is $325, and a baffle for street use retails for $25.

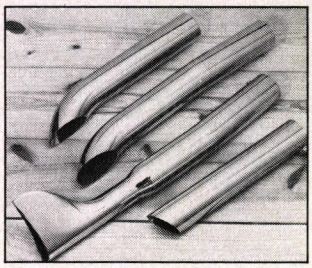




DG Performance Specialties
1230 La Loma Circle
Anaheim, California 92806
(714) 630-5471
Catalog: $1

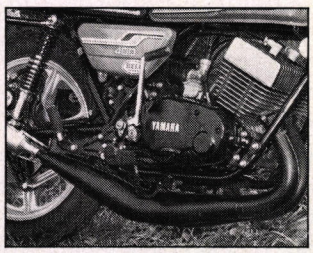
DG Performance Specialties makes street and off-road pipes for most popular Japanese motorcycles. Replacement OEM-type, rebuildable BMW mufflers (pictured, $159.50), replacement head pipes ($86.50), and a chrome two-into-one system ($159.50) for BMWs also are available. The streetbike exhausts utilize a single-muffler design, with the exception of the Yamaha RD-series pipes, and most are available in chrome or black. The Yamaha IT175 J/K pipe is designed for use with DG's cylinder head ($99.50 each) and is guaranteed by the maker to improve performance. The Pro Series of stamped-steel off-road pipes have suggested retail prices ranging from $64.50 for a Honda XR75/80 to $109.50 for a Suzuki RM500Z.

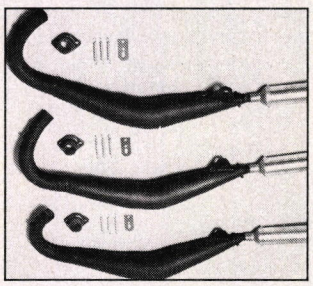




Drag Specialties
5401 Smetana Drive
Minnetonka, Minnesota
55343
(612) 935-1000
Catalog: $4

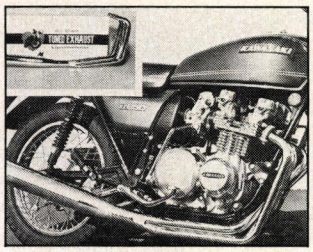
Drag Specialties has a large selection of exhaust systems for virtually every Harley-Davidson and most Japanese models. Their new Python MII pipes (pictured) are designed for use with the stock 38mm Keihin carburetor, without jetting changes, and has suggested retail prices of $144.95 to $149.95. Drag's Honda Gold Wing exhaust extensions (pictured) are available in straight, turn-down and fishtail designs, and in two lengths to help deflect exhaust gases away from saddlebags and accessories. The pipes will fit '78-'83 Gold Wings and suggested retail prices range from $42.88 to $99.95. Most systems and accessories feature Drag Specialties' Blue Diamond show chrome finish.

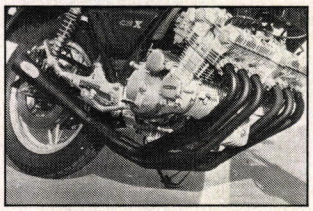




Factory Pipe Products
816-A Waugh Lane
Ukiah, California 95482
(707) 463-1322
Information available

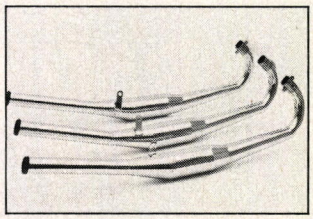
Factory Pipe Products specializes in expansion chambers for all street Yamaha RDs, including LC models, and triple-pipe systems for Kawasaki's H1 and H2 models. All systems feature tapered head pipes, rebuildable aluminum mufflers with perforated cores, and a reduction in weight compared to stock systems. The RD pipes also come with special manifolds for a suggested retail price of $140 per set, in black only. Kawasaki H1 and H2 pipes have a claimed weight of 16 pounds and retail for $210 a set, with all necessary mounting hardware.

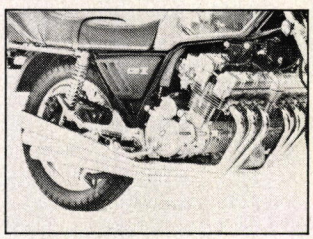




Hooker Headers
1032 West Brooks St.
Ontario, California 91761
(714) 983-5871
Catalog: Free

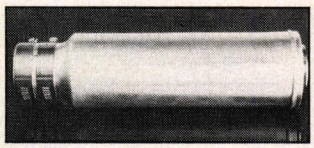
Hooker Headers makes street and off-road systems for most two- and four-stroke Japanese bikes, road/racing and drag racing pipes for some, and systems for BMWs, Harley-Davidsons, Triumphs and Nortons. Many Hooker pipes do not meet street noise requirements, and must be removed for oil filter access. Streetbike exhaust suggested retail prices range from $63.75 for Honda's SL70 to $430.25 for Honda's CB750F model. The Kawasaki four-into-one system shown fits '77-'80 KZ650 models, including the SR and LTD, and retails for $252. Hooker's Honda CBX six-into-one system retails for $234.50 in black or $300.50 in chrome, and requires removal of the centerstand.

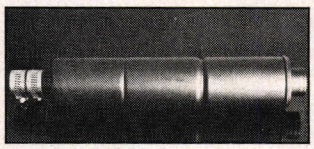




Hot Bike Engineering
4432 Enterprise St. D & E
Fremont, California 94538
(415) 657-3864
Information available

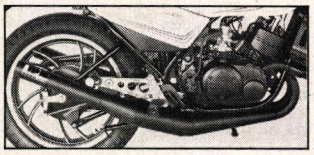
Hot Bike Engineering makes street and racing pipes for most Japanese two-stroke and four-stroke street motorcycles except Suzukis. Pictured are street chambers for Kawasaki triples which have a suggested retail price ranging from $199.95 to $299.95 (depending on street or racing application). The four-stroke pipes include a Honda CBX six-into-six system which retails for $299.95 in black or $349.95 in chrome. All collector systems are available in either black or chrome, allow retention of side and centerstands, and have repackable mufflers. Racing systems also are available for Honda's CB900F and Kawasaki's GPz1100. HBE also makes R.P.O. (Racing Purposes Only) systems, especially for dragracing, to fit some Honda and Kawasaki models.





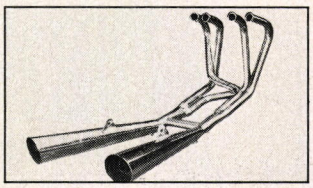
JR Manufacturing
27967 Beale Court
Valencia, California 91355
(805) 257-2614
Brochure: Free

JR Manufacturing specializes in clamp-on and weld-on silencers and spark arrestor/silencers for two-stroke off-road bikes. A variety of steel and aluminum units are available in various diameters for the body, core and inlet pipe. The U.S.F.S.-approved spark arrestors have suggested retail prices of $14.95 to $22.95 in steel, and $20.95 to $32.95 in aluminum. Silencers retail for $11.95 for weld-on steel units and $25.95 for clamp-on aluminum models.



J & R Exhaust Systems
3565 Cadillac Ave.
Costa Mesa, California 92626
(714) 540-5009
Brochure: $2

J & R's exhaust line includes street and off-road systems for two-stroke Kawasakis, Suzukis and Yamahas, pipes for many Honda XL and XR models, and replacement mufflers for BMWs, as well. Pictured are street chambers for Yamaha's RD350 L/C, available in black ($228.65) or chrome ($249.90). BMW replacement mufflers retail for $136.30 to $149.70.



Jardine Header Co.
7142 Belgrave Ave.
Garden Grove, California 92641
(714) 893-7594
Catalog: Free

Jardine Header Co. manufacturers four-into-one systems for streetbikes and dragracers, and a wide variety of custom and standard-type slip-on replacement mufflers for most popular Japanese machines. The Honda 750/900K Custom Streetwinder system shown is available in black ($130) or chrome ($265) finish, is intended for use with most saddlebags and Jardine claims the pipe does not require rejetting. The Honda Shadow VT750 replacement mufflers pictured are available in various styles from Balogna Cut to Weedburner Turn-outs for suggested retail prices ranging from $130 to $150. All pipes feature a 90-day limited warranty.

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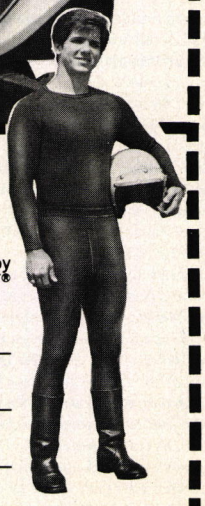
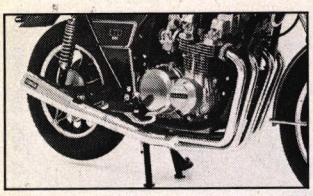
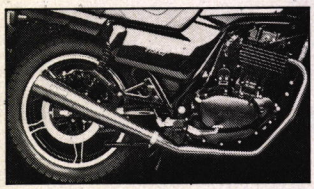
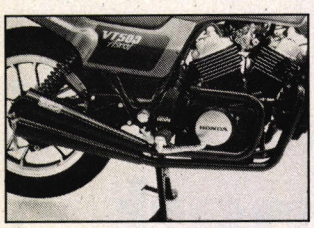


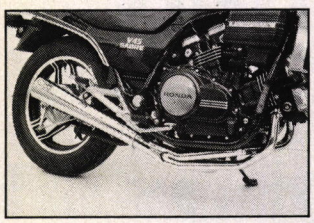




Kerker
7900 Deering Ave.
Canoga Park, California 91304
(213) 999-3060
Catalog: $2

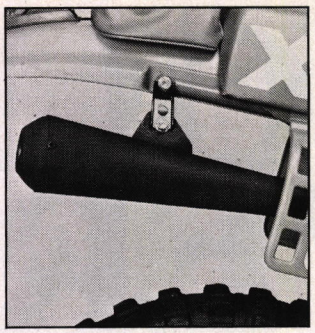
Kerker manufactures street and racing pipes for most Japanese four-strokes. Standard street models, like the Kawasaki KZ650 LTD pipes shown ($225), generally feature access to the oil filter and drain plug, as well as centerstand retention, unlike the KR Series racing systems. The Honda FT500 Ascot pipe has a suggested retail price of $165, either for black or chrome. All other street systems are available in chrome or black with suggested retail prices ranging from $225 to $340. KR-series pipes are available in both finishes, as well, and retail from $275 to $290. Slip-on replacement mufflers are available only for the Honda CB400/450 Hawk ($165) and '75-'78 CB750F ($100).





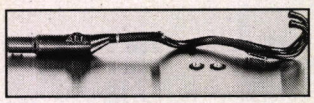
M.A.C. Products Inc.
1410 W. Gaylord St.
Long Beach, California 90813
(213) 436-5462
Information available

M.A.C. manufactures exhaust systems to fit most four-stroke Japanese streetbikes and a variety of systems for some European brands that were originally marketed by M.C.M. Most pipes are available in chrome or M.A.C.'s new high-gloss black ceramic coating, which is guaranteed not to burn off or discolor. Pictured is Flat-Tracker system for the '83 Honda VT500 Ascot, with removable baffles for street or track use. It retains access to all service points, requires modification or removal of the centerstand, and has a suggested retail price of $139.95 for chrome and $134.95 for black. Also shown is a four-into-one pipe for '83 Honda V-65 Magnas and all V-45 Magna/Sabres. It features filter access, centerstand retention, a removable baffle, and a claimed 18-pound weight reduction compared to stock. Suggested retail price is $179.95 for chrome and $159.95 for black.



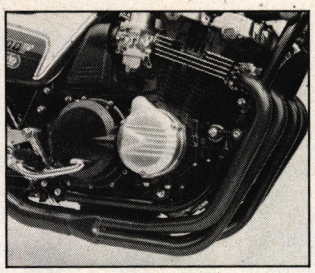
Motorifics U.S.A.
1584 Redlands Place
Costa Mesa, California 92627
(714) 642-9450
Information available

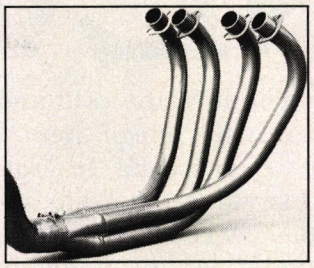
Motorifics specializes in off-road four-stroke exhaust systems and partial-system components to fit most late-model Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki, Yamaha, Can-Am and KTM thumpers. Pictured is the Honda XR500R tailpipe with megaphone-style silencer and all-metal internal baffling, which has a suggested retail price of $49.95. Complete pipes retail from $70.95 to $114.95.



Mugen U.S.A. Co. Ltd.
6944 Santa Fe Ave. East
Hesperia, California 92345
(619) 244-6405
Brochure: $1

Mugen U.S.A. designs, develops and manufactures competition-proven exhaust systems and components exclusively for Honda CR, XR and XL motorcycles. Pictured is the Works EX Chamber for '83 CR125s ($125). Also shown is Mugen's Baja exhaust system for '79 and '80 XR500s and all XL500s, which has a suggested retail price of $125. Their '83 XR500 Mugen Race Megaphone uses the same specifications as the Jack Johnson/Al Baker/Bob Balentine Baja-winning Hondas, weighs a claimed 3 1/2-pounds less than stock and retails for $65. Equal-length head pipes alone for '79 and '80 XR/XL500s retail for $170, or $99 for '81 and '82s.



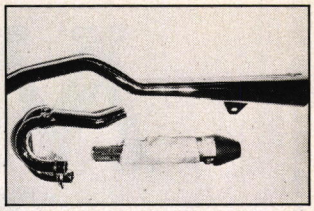


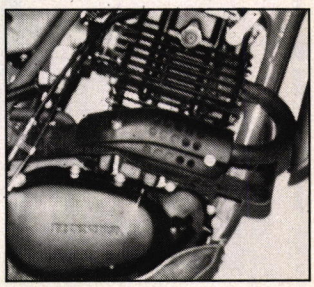
Ontario Moto Tech Corp.
6850 Vineland Ave.
Unit 16
North Hollywood, California 91605
(213) 766-7101
Catalog: $2

Ontario Moto Tech specializes in exhaust systems for four- and six-cylinder Hondas. The street line includes four-into-one pipes for the CB400F, 500/550, 750K, F and Custom, 900/1000 Custom, 900F, 1100F (pictured) and a six-into-two system for the CBX. Each pipe features an all-metal baffle system, nickel-chrome plating (except 400, 500 and 550 pipes), centerstand retention and oil-filter access. Hand-bent racing systems also are available for the CB750, 900 and 1100F (pictured), either with street or racing tail-sections ($405). Street pipes' suggested retail prices range from $205 to $215 ($320 for CBX) for a black Kal-Gard finish, with an additional $10 charge for chrome.

Powroll Performance Products Inc.
P.O. Box 1206
Bend, Oregon 97701
(503) 382-6395
Catalog and Performance Handbook: $3

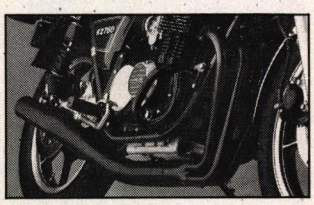
Powroll Performance specializes in off-road four-stroke engine performance kits and exhaust systems; all pipes are tuned for specific results, like low-end and mid-range torque or high-rpm power. Pictured is the Honda XR200R kit, which includes a large-diameter head pipe ($39), a U.S.F.S.-approved SuperTrapp silencer/spark arrestor and all necessary mounting hardware. Non-street-legal systems also are available for most popular dual-purpose machines.

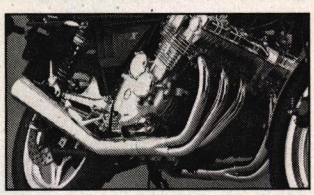




Pro-Tec
282 Gemini
Brea, California 92621
(714) 738-0631
Catalog: $2.50

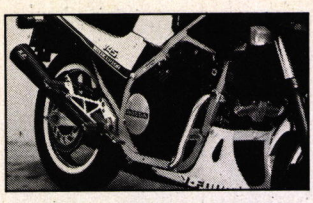
Pro-Tec has a full line of four-stroke single-cylinder exhaust systems and partial-system add-ons for most popular Japanese off-road and dual-purpose motorcycles. In addition, Pro-Tec offers a chrome megaphone-style system for '78-'80 Yamaha SR500s ($106.95), and a variety of clamp-on spark arrestors and silencers, for both two-strokes and four-strokes ($18.95 to $49.95). Pictured is a chrome-finish pipe for the Yamaha XT550, complete with glass-packed, megaphone-style muffler ($179.95). Also shown is an add-on rear section, complete with SuperTrapp spark arrestor/silencer for XR/XL500 Hondas ($98.95).

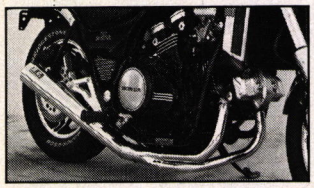




RB Racing
9063 W. Washington Blvd.
Culver City, California 90230
(213) 838-6464
Catalog: $3

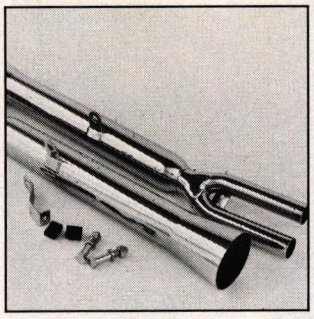
RB Racing manufactures a selection of four-stroke racing exhaust systems to fit most multi-cylinder 500cc-and-larger Japanese bikes, and specialized high-performance and turbocharged equipment. Each pipe is constructed of 16-gauge steel, features rebuildable baffle-type silencers, is available in chrome, black chrome, or a black plasma-coat finish. "RB Racing guarantees our exhaust systems will outperform any other manufacturer's exhaust system." Pictured is RB's Kawasaki KZ750 pipe in black plasma-coat, which has a suggested retail price of $219.50 ($239.50 in black chrome, $219.50 in chrome). Also shown is the six-into-two Honda CBX system, which retails for $315.50 in chrome and plasma-coat, and $329.50 in black chrome.





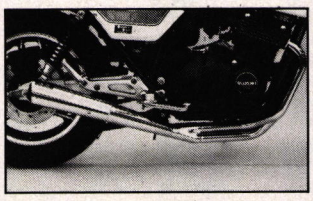
R.C. Engineering
5781 Machine Drive
Huntington Beach, California
92649
(714) 898-6033
Catalog: $3

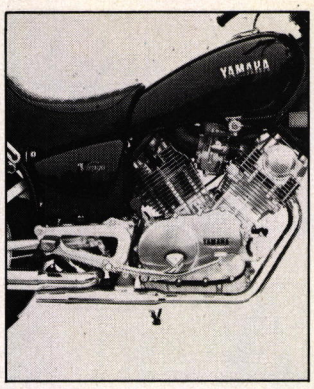
R.C. Engineering markets a complete line of street and racing exhaust systems for most popular Japanese multi-cylinder machines. Most of R.C.'s street pipes are four-into-one designs which feature removable, rebuildable fiberglass muffler inserts, racing-design megaphones, oil-filter access, centerstand retention and a choice of high-temperature black finish or chrome. Pictured is R.C.'s four-into-one Honda Interceptor unit, which replaces both mufflers and the "boom box." R.C. claims the pipe requires no re-jetting, but centerstand removal is necessary, and it's available in chrome or black for a suggested retail price of $159. Also shown is R.C.'s V65 Honda four-into-one system, which retails for $219 in black and $229 in chrome.



Ram-Flow Mufflers
1111 South Fremont Ave.
Alhambra, California 91803
(213) 284-7150 or (800) 423-4883
Catalog: Available

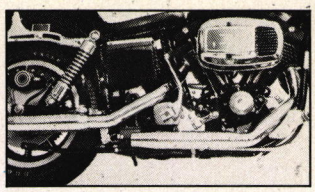
Ram-Flow replacement mufflers are available for most popular Japanese motorcycles, as well as Moto-Guzzis and Harley-Davidsons. The two-into-one mufflers fit stock head pipes, include mounting hardware and are chrome-plated. Also available are Fish Tail pipes for all Harley-Davidson models. Shown are the Honda CB750 replacement mufflers, which have a suggested retail price of $146.95. Systems also are available for some twin-cylinder motorcycles, including the Honda VT750 Shadow.

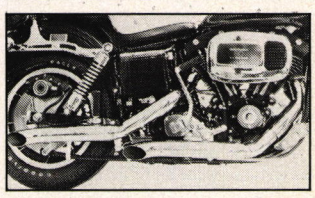




S & S Performance
3565 Cadillac Ave.
Costa Mesa, California 92626
(714) 546-8635
Catalog: $2

S & S Performance has street and off-road pipes, as well as replacement mufflers for Hondas, Kawasakis, Suzukis, Yamahas, BMWs, Nortons, Triumphs and Harley-Davidsons. All street systems and replacement mufflers have triple-coat chrome plating, and the headers feature double-wall tubing from the cylinder to the first bend to reduce bluing. Pictured is S & S's new four-into-one roadrace-style pipe for '80-'83 Suzuki GS750 and 1100E/ES models. It offers centerstand retention, and access to the oil filter and drain bolt ($215.25). Also shown is a Staggered Duals system for the Yamaha 750 Virago ($123.05.) Replacement mufflers have suggested retail prices ranging from $102 and $149. Two-stroke silencers and spark arrestors are available in 1- or 1-1/4-inch inlet-diameters and retail for $18.





Santee Industries
651 Arroyo Ave.
San Fernando, California
91340
(213) 365-3236
Catalog: $3

Santee Industries sells a variety of custom-style exhaust systems and drag/show pipes to fit virtually every Harley-Davidson model. In addition, Santee markets a Slash-Cut set of 1-1/2-inch drag pipes for 750 Hondas and 900 Kawasakis ($109.95), internally-baffled 1-3/4-inch drag pipes for '71-and-earlier 650 Triumphs ($74.95), and replacement megaphones for '74 and '75 Yamaha 500 and 650s ($72.95). Most of Santee's Fish Tail, Drag, Turn-Out and Shotgun Harley pipes have suggested retail prices between $56.95 (drag pipes) and $109.95. Pictured are the 2-inch Tapered Turbos for '72-and-newer Shovelhead Harleys ($109.95), and 2-1/2-inch Turn-Out Titans for the same year machines ($124.95).

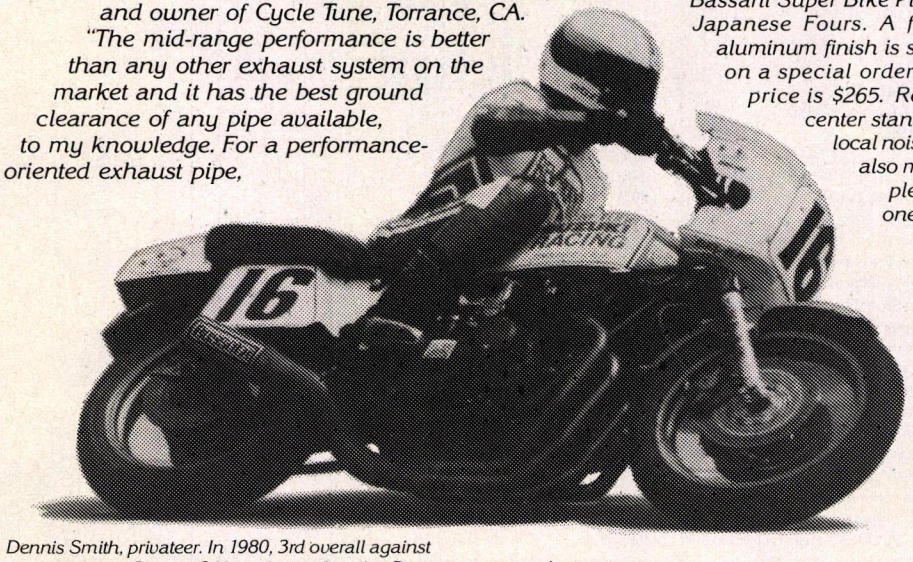
NO COMPROMISE.

We build the Bassani Super Bike Pipe to give you more horsepower and better cornering clearance than any other exhaust system. Period. And we'll never compromise. Ever.

"We've compared 'em to other exhaust systems, and they definitely produce the most horsepower," says Dennis Smith, a top roadracing privateer and owner of Cycle Tune, Torrance, CA. "The mid-range performance is better than any other exhaust system on the market and it has the best ground clearance of any pipe available, to my knowledge. For a performance-oriented exhaust pipe, Bassani is the best."

No surprise to us. We hand-build every Bassani Super Bike Pipe to give you the kind of power you don't need a dyno to check out. It's power you can feel. By the seat of your pants. And if you don't believe us, just ask Dennis.

Bassani Super Bike Pipes are available to fit most Japanese Fours. A flat black, plasma-coated aluminum finish is standard. Chrome available on a special order basis. Suggested retail price is $265. Requires removal of the center stand. For street use check local noise ordinances. Bassani also manufactures a complete line of four-into-one exhaust systems strictly for street that allow use of the center stand. Suggested retail is $240 in chrome (black is extra). Stock up on Bassani exhaust systems today. And forget about tuning problems or customer complaints about less than anticipated performance increases. Call (714) 630-1821 or (800) 854-6228 (out of state only).



Dennis Smith, privateer. In 1980, 3rd overall against the factories at Ontario 6-Hour; fastest first-day Daytona trap speeds at 160+ mph. Dennis could run anybody's pipe. But he doesn't. He's sold on Bassani.

Dealer inquiries invited.

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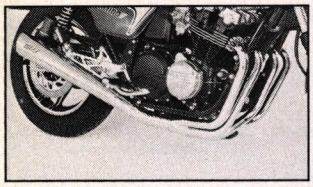
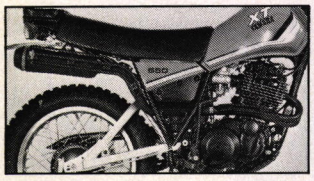
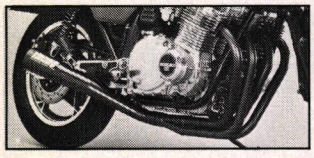
3726 E. Miraloma
Anaheim, CA 92806

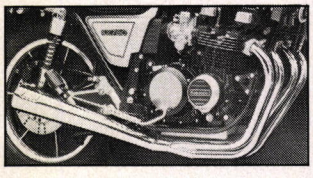




SuperTrapp Division
Moller Corp.
1222 Research Park Drive
Davis, California 95616
(916) 756-5069
Information: Free

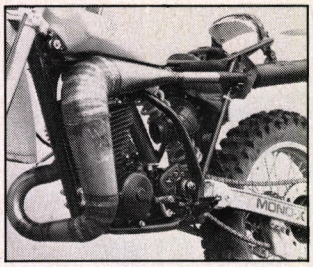
SuperTrapp, a division of Moller Corp., manufactures a full line of dyno- and track-developed four-stroke street/competition systems to fit most multi-cylinder Japanese motorcycles, 550cc and larger. SuperTrapp claims each street system features: availability of doublewall chrome finish to reduce discoloration; no rejetting; a patented, tunable, all-mechanical, disc-type baffle system which eliminates fiberglass packing and allows precise control of noise-level and back pressure; centerstand retention; access to oil filter and drain bolt; a claimed weight-saving of up to 21 pounds; compliance with '83 EPA noise regulations; and a choice of duplex nickel-chrome plating or Ceramicoat 2500 pigmented black coating. Pictured is the four-into-one exhaust for the Honda CB1100F ($249.95 in chrome, $219.95 in black) and an add-on system with 4-inch silencer/spark arrestor for Yamaha XT550s ($79.95).

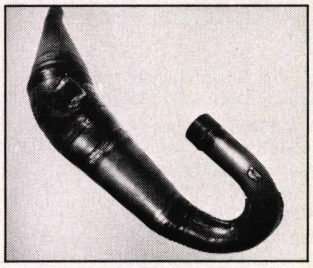




Vance & Hines
14010 Marquardt Ave.
Santa Fe Springs, California
90670
(213) 921-7461
Catalog: $2

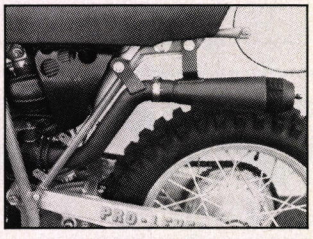
Vance & Hines specializes in dyno-developed systems for most four-stroke, 550cc-and-larger multi-cylinder Japanese road bikes. Most of the systems feature VHR's three-time Pro-Stock Championship-winning collector design, and VHR claims improved cornering clearance, reduced weight, oil filter and drain plug access, side and centerstand retention and a choice of chrome or Kal-Gard black finish. Pictured is a four-into-one Suzuki GS1100 Superbike Pipe, which was originally developed for the Vance & Hines GS1000 Katana ridden by Mike Spencer in AMA Superbike competition. It features a removable baffle, requires centerstand removal, and has a suggested retail price of $250 in black and $260 in chrome. Also shown is the VHR Kawasaki KZ750 performance system that retails for $225 in chrome and $219 in Kal-Gard black finish.

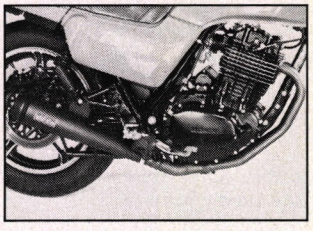




Wheelsmith Motorcycles
18020 Euclid
Fountain Valley, California 92708
(714) 751-0680
Information available

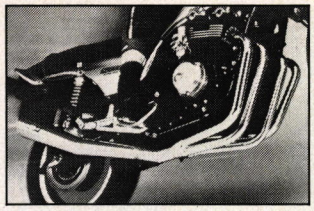
Wheelsmith hand-fabricates two-stroke motocross exhaust systems to fit all '75-'83 250 and 490 Maicos, '83 Honda CRs, and '83 Yamaha YZ125, 250 and 490s. All pipes are constructed of 20-gauge cold-rolled AK steel, using rolled cones rather than stamped units. Pictured is a YZ490 pipe which has a suggested retail price of $139, and a CR125 pipe that retails for $119.

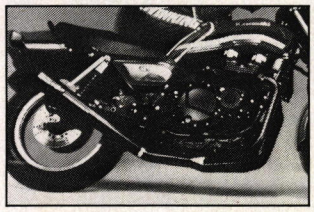




White Bros.
11750 Seaboard Circle
Stanton, California 90680
(714) 895-1991
Catalog: $1

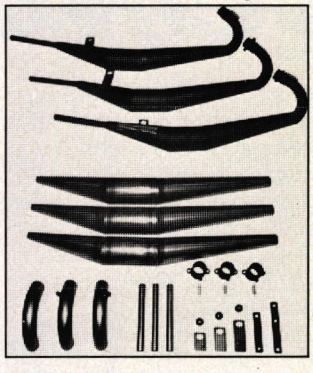
White Bros. are specialists in single-cylinder four-stroke street, competition, off-road and dual-purpose exhaust systems. The firm also markets a set of Yamaha RD400D, E and F expansion chambers, either with steel or alloy silencers ($149.95 to $189.95), a SuperTrapp-equipped megaphone-style system for Yamaha SR500s ($119.95 in black, $149.95 in chrome) and a variety of silencers, spark arrestor/silencers, S-bend pipes and other exhaust items. Pictured is a KTM504 silencer kit, which replaces the standard pipe from the midsection back and includes a 3-inch tunable SuperTrapp spark/arrestor silencer. Suggested retail prices for the KTM kit and for Japanese thumpers range from $69.95 to $74.95 (KTM). Also shown is a Honda FT500 Ascot system, which retails for $134.95.





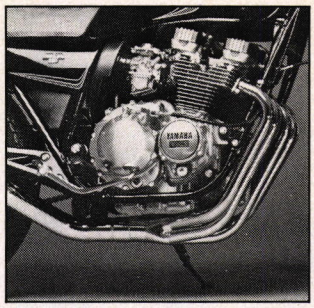
Winning Performance Products
15137 Califa St.
Van Nuys, California 91411
(213) 780-0754
Catalog: $2

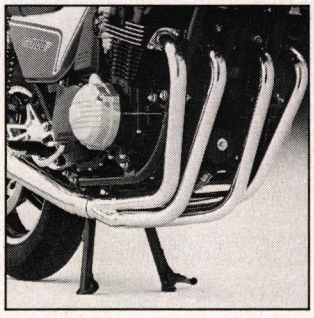
Winning Performance sells a line of four-stroke street systems to fit most Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha motorcycles, as well as an economy Kicker line, which is available only in four-into-one designs. Kicker systems are sold in both chrome ($160) and Kal-Gard black ($129) versions for most popular Japanese models. Suggested retail prices for the regular Winning systems are $220 for chrome-finish and $196 for Kal-Gard black. Pictured is the Winning Performance Honda CB900F ProRace pipe, which requires centerstand removal, and the W.P. Kawasaki GPz1100 ProRace pipe in Kal-Gard black. Winning Performance claims most Winning and Kicker systems feature dyno and track-tested performance, centerstand retention, increased cornering clearance and rebuildable baffle-type silencers. An exclusive Astro Blast finish is available as an option, in a choice of white, black or gold.



Wirges Creative Performance
Box 408, Rural Route 2
Princeton, Illinois 61356
(815) 875-3354
Information available

Wirges Creative Performance manufactures race-developed and competition-proven tuned expansion chambers for Kawasaki and Suzuki triple-cylinder machines. Complete systems and kits are available, either in muffled pipes or unmuffled race versions. All systems include necessary hardware for mounting and feature an exclusive Bill Wirges-designed internal baffle, spring-mounted cylinder flanges and rubberized mounting brackets. Kawasaki systems with mufflers have a suggested retail price of $224.95. Total Performance Chambers for Kawasakis retail for $199.95 ready to install, or $174.95 in kit form. The Suzuki pipes are available only in an assembled, muffled version, for $224.95.





Yoshimura Research & Development of America
4555 Carter Court
Chino, California 91710
(714) 628-4722
Catalog: $4

Yoshimura Research & Development offers three styles of pipes engineered to fit most Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha four-stroke, four-cylinder motorcycles. The Series VII systems are street-legal versions of Yoshimura R & D Superbike team race pipes, which feature equal-length head pipes, a Dyno-Flow collector and a twin-swirl all-metal baffle, in a chrome ($210) or new reflective Kal-Gard black finish ($195). A Series VII Yamaha Seca 550 system is pictured. Yoshimura's Series VIII pipes are the firm's latest designs and are claimed to feature oil filter and drain bolt access, centerstand retention, a choice of reflective black Kal-Gard finish ($215) or chrome finish ($235), and either a street or competition baffle (Honda CB1100F Series VIII pictured). Racing Replica exhausts are available to fit Suzuki's GS750, 1100 and Katana 1000/1100, and Kawasaki's KZ1000, GPz750 and 1100 models. Each comes only in reflective black Kal-Gard for a suggested retail price of $300.

Catch it. The Look of Power. The Sound of Speed. The new *Kerker System K2* and *System K2S*. To our unmatched line of high performance exhaust, Kerker adds two aggressively designed racer black exhaust systems tipped with factory works styled aluminum megaphones. Specific systems custom dyno-tuned for each model application. Both molded from highest-tech racing materials that minimize weight and maximize performance. Two open systems that pound out the pure sound of power and speed, leaving mechanically baffled systems sounding like they're just passing gas. And like the traditional Kerker exhausts, these new systems can be custom tuned with Kerker's unique system of interchangeable baffles.

System K2; the ultimate racing exhaust—lightest weight, maximum cornering clearance. System K2S; a street system that lets you bolt-on K2 performance without unbolting your center stand or altering your oil filter and drain plug access.* Both from Kerker, whose innovative designs helped power Team Kawasaki to two consecutive AMA Superbike Championships!

The Kerker System K2 and System K2S. Giving you wings and the sound of speed.

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KERKER

For further information, contact
Kerker Exhaust Systems, Dept. CG, 7900 Deering Avenue Canoga Park, CA 91304 213-999-3060 800-382-3689 in CA 800-423-5246 outside CA Telex: 662622
Bolt-on a new System K2 or System K2S on to your CB1100, GS 750, GPZ 1100, GPZ 750, GPZ 550, or Honda V's (call for info on other systems). Send certified check, money order, VISA or Mastercard number including expiration date directly to Kerker. Both systems $225.00 plus $15.00 shipping and handling. CA residents add tax. *on most systems

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KXT250 Tecate

Kawasaki

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SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Race Courses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

EDITED BY DAIN GINGERELLI

Factory Strike!

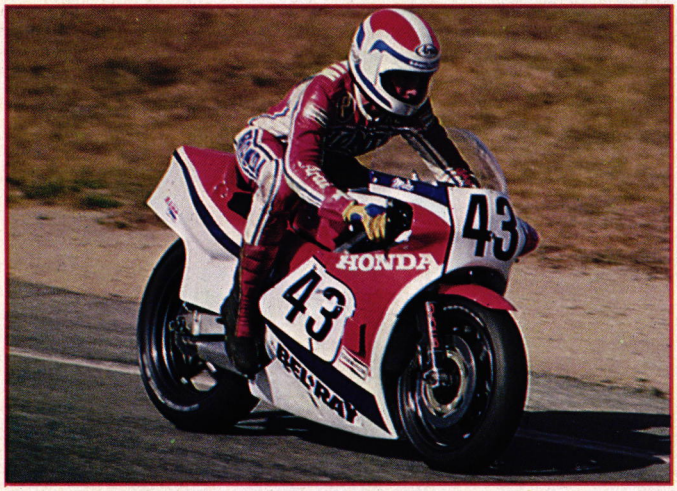
Privateers unite against the factories.

• Nick Richichi had just finished a brilliant ride aboard his Yamaha TZ750 at Laguna Seca. For 32 laps during the first leg of the Champion Spark Plug Classic he had shadowed Miles Baldwin, also TZ-mounted, for fourth place. And finally, on the penultimate lap, Richichi made his move, a desperate braking maneuver in Turn Nine that any Class-C expert flattracker would envy. Richichi's goal was obvious: He wanted to be top privateer in the first leg.

The Richichi/Baldwin Heat One dice went practically unnoticed by the Laguna Seca crowd, which paid closer attention to the cat-and-mouse game played by factory riders Randy Mamola (Suzuki) and Eddie Lawson (Yamaha). And with Kenny Roberts stuck on the sidelines (a broken chain adjuster disabled his Yamaha OW69 for the first heat), the coveted Laguna Seca crown was up for grabs by Mamola, Lawson, or even Honda's Mike Baldwin, who was circulating the 1.9-mile course in a distant

Factory riders lead the charge down the Corkscrew

Kenny Roberts played foreman in the second heat.



Factory spokesman Mike Baldwin brakes for Turn Nine

The management wants him to win.

Privateer Miles Baldwin; hoping to go from rags to riches

Union, union, union!

Continued

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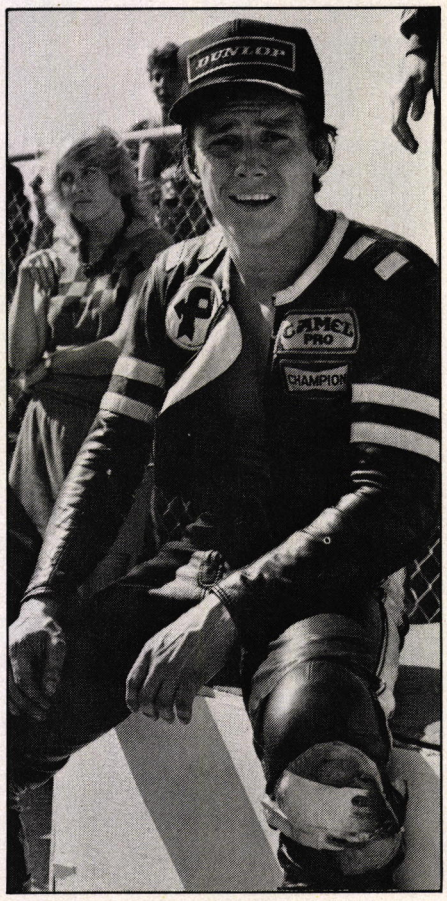
Nick Richichi and Miles Baldwin flying formation through the Corkscrew

By teaming together, they hope to uncork the victory champagne.



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Miles Baldwin between heats

Leading the points, and the rebellion.

third position. As for Richichi and "Milo" Baldwin, there was honor at stake—the honor of being the first privateer behind the factory riders.

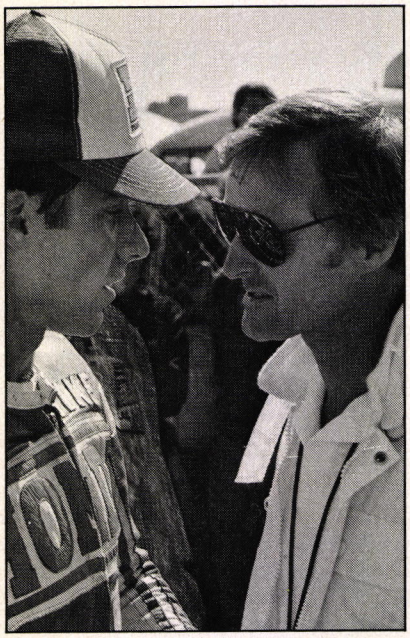
But more than honor alone was up for grabs in the Richichi/Baldwin dice. Each of the two privateers desperately wanted to beat the factories, and during the brief hiatus before the second heat, they talked about it. What evolved from that conversation was the formation of a privateer's team. The two self-sponsored racers came to an agreement: Since Milo was leading the Formula 1 point standings, he and Richichi would team up and do whatever possible to get him the title. It was time, they figured, to strike against the factories. They would unite and bring the F1 crown back into the privateer's domain.

And so their Laguna Seca race plan was devised. The second-heat scenario was simple: As long as both Richichi and Milo Baldwin were still in the race, Baldwin was to cross the finish line first, thus garnering valuable championship points.

But when the second heat started, Richichi sprinted ahead of Milo, and into fourth place behind the factory bikes of Roberts, Mamola and Baldwin (Lawson's chain adjuster broke in the second heat). Miles Baldwin plugged along throughout the 100-kilometer heat in fifth position, until the final lap when Richichi slowed to wait for his new teammate at Turn Nine. Richichi was uncertain at the time as to who it was behind him: "I saw the plus-seven

Continued

Iron Man Mike Baldwin



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Baldwin and team manager Udo Gietl

Baldwin: It's all in the wrists.

• While Miles Baldwin and Nick Richichi commanded center stage in the press room following their announcement of Team Privateer, someone important to the race was missing. Mike Baldwin, Honda *factory* rider, had declined to attend the customary post-race conference.

Baldwin had a reason not to talk about his second-overall finish behind Randy Mamola: He was in pain. Just 18 days before Laguna Seca, Baldwin underwent surgery for a broken right wrist and severely sprained left hand. Dr. David Kieffer, the man who repaired Baldwin following the Pocono crash, said the surgery was "routine, but intended more to help him not miss any races rather than to heal quickly."

So with the Formula 1 title on the line, Baldwin elected to ride at Laguna Seca. He was, frankly, a crippled man piloting a 150-horsepower motorcycle. Even all the millions of dollars that American Honda had to fuel its race team couldn't help Baldwin in this situation. The job of making the three-cylinder RS500 competitive was, literally, in Baldwin's hands. And to that task, Baldwin showed his mettle, riding steadily to two third-place finishes, good for second overall. In the process, he proved that no matter how many surgically implanted stainless steel pins and screws are used, the true test of an iron man is his constitution. —*Dain Gingerelli*

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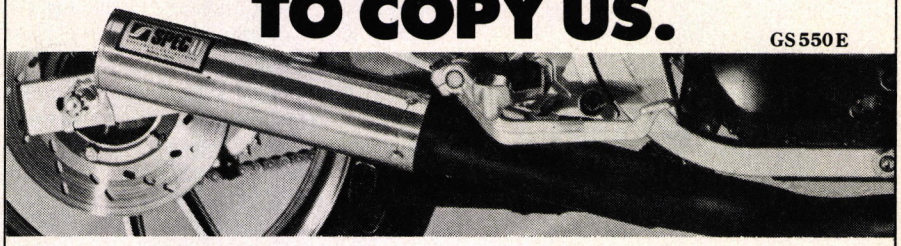

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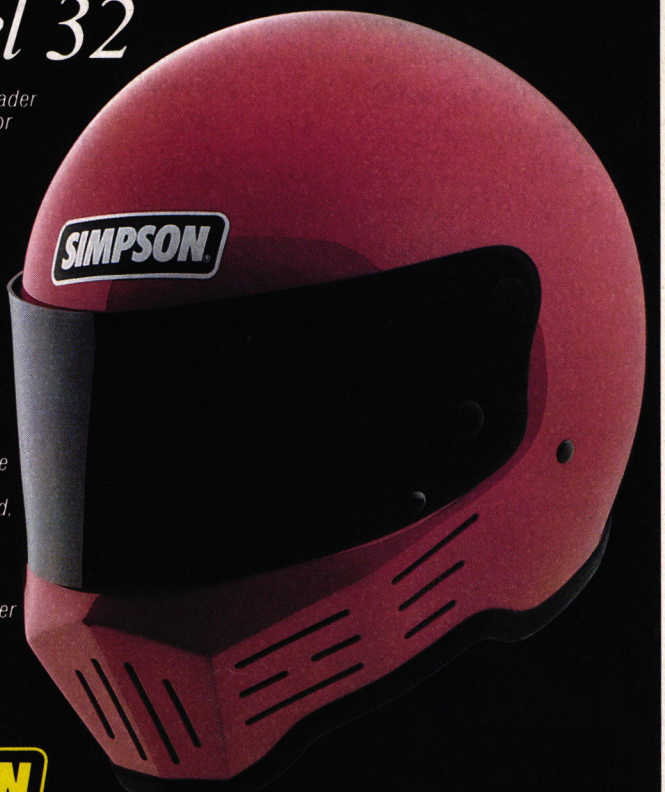

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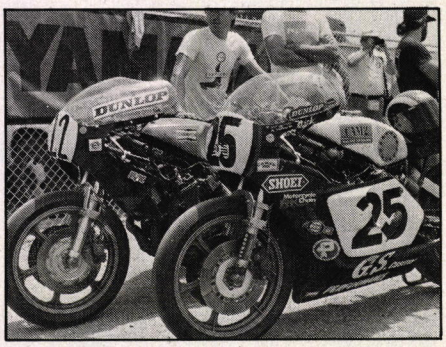
sign on the pit board, but I didn't know if it was Miles or not." When Milo came around, they accelerated together up the hill, taking the checkered flag with Richichi only inches behind Baldwin. "Miles thought that I had stiffed him," said Richichi later. But the pact was upheld; the deal was consummated.

Miles Baldwin, who continues to lead the F1 points standings with his third-place finish, announced the formation of the team to the press immediately after the race. "Everybody knows that teams have strategies. Well, we're a privateer team, and we have a strategy now," he said.

Richichi, who traded prize money with Milo (after all, a deal's a deal) expressed the philosophy as simply as possible: "I'd like to see a privateer win it this year, and Miles is in a good position to do it. I'll help him if I can." And to do that, they've pooled their resources—as meager as they might be compared to the factory teams—in an effort to see Miles Baldwin finish first in the points war.

Still, there are no banners or catch phrases like "Follow the Leader" for this team. Nor are there any dedicated and hard-working team mechanics to help in the crusade. Just two riders with a burning desire to win. Richichi said it all shortly after Laguna Seca: "The privateers aren't just waiting around on strings to kiss ass to the factory teams anymore. We're not laying down and being bowled over one pin at a time now." Any doubts about his commitment to Milo were erased when he assessed the F1 points status with two races remaining. "I wish it (the points standings) were the other way around, but Miles is leading, so that's that. I'll help him win the championship." *–Dain Gingerelli*



Team Privateer bikes at rest

Waiting for the factory whistle to blow.

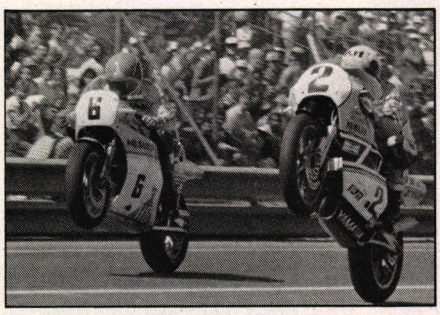
Honda's Laguna Seca assembly line

"You'll have to talk to the foreman."

ROADRACING:

Wheelies!

Unicycling at 120 mph.



Randy Mamola (6) and Kenny Roberts (2)

Giving a wheel-standing ovation.

• Randy Mamola knew the score. He had just won his second Laguna Seca Champion Spark Plug Classic, but the real challenge awaited him as he crossed the finish line. He had to pull a wheelie bigger and longer than the one pulled by Kenny Roberts.

Mamola's pressure to perform well on one wheel for the Laguna Seca crowd was reflected in his post-race comment: "I figured I'd get my wheel up in the air so I didn't look so bad compared to Kenny." As it developed, he didn't look bad at all.

Wheelies have become a tradition at Laguna Seca. King Kenny started it in 1979 when he annihilated the TZ750 horde with his then year-old YZR500 works bike. But even though that 1979 race turned into a

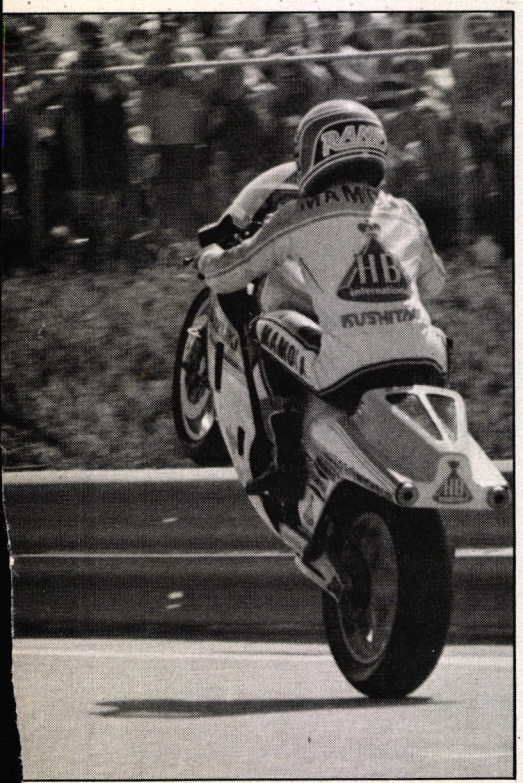
turkey shoot, Roberts gave the crowd something to cheer about—wheelies when exiting Turn Nine. In his words, the wheelstanding was for "the crowd."

Since that race, more turns have been added to the Wheelie Show, until now practically everywhere the 500cc bikes accelerate, they also have their front wheels in the air. This year's show featured Mamola and Roberts. They started to play during the initial laps of the second heat, Roberts leading, Mamola second. The show was momentarily postponed, though, when Eddie Lawson streaked by them after the start/finish. "All of a sudden Lawson came by us . . . *tucked in*," Mamola said after the race. Even Roberts couldn't understand Lawson's intentions: "*I* didn't want to go that fast, but Eddie set the pace." But by lap 12 a broken chain adjuster on Lawson's OW69—the same malady that sidelined Roberts in the first heat—reinstated the Mamola/Roberts Wheelie Show.

As it developed, Mamola got the best ratings of the day for his Turn Two one-standers. He explained later that he *had* to keep his HB Suzuki's front end light—or in the air—through the turn, so the rear suspension was compressed for the dip at the apex. Otherwise, Mamola said, the bike wanted to go sideways; all at 120 miles per hour.

Win, lose or draw, both performers enjoyed the act. Because while wheelies might look spectacular for the crowd, they're not hard to do—relatively speaking, of course. "I'd call it riding 95 percent, not 100 percent," Roberts said nonchalanty. Sure.

—Dain Gingerelli



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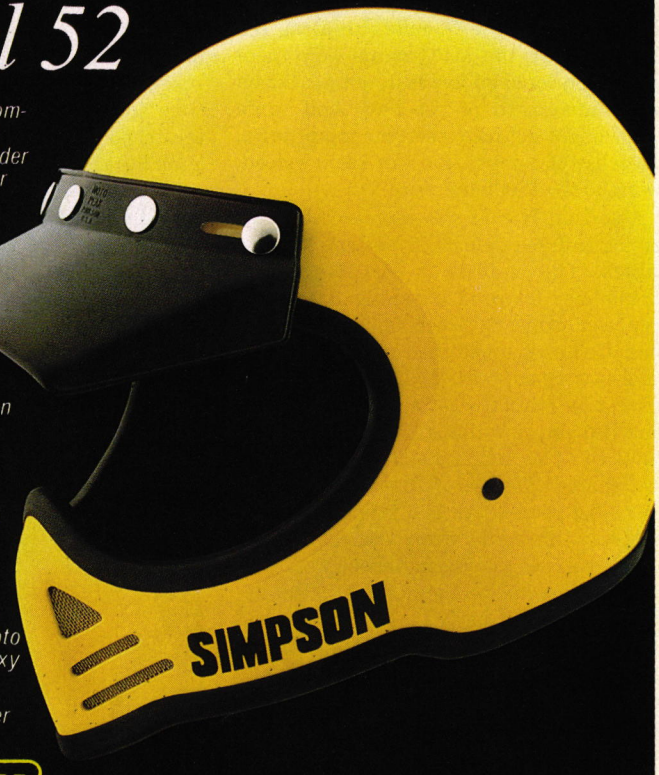

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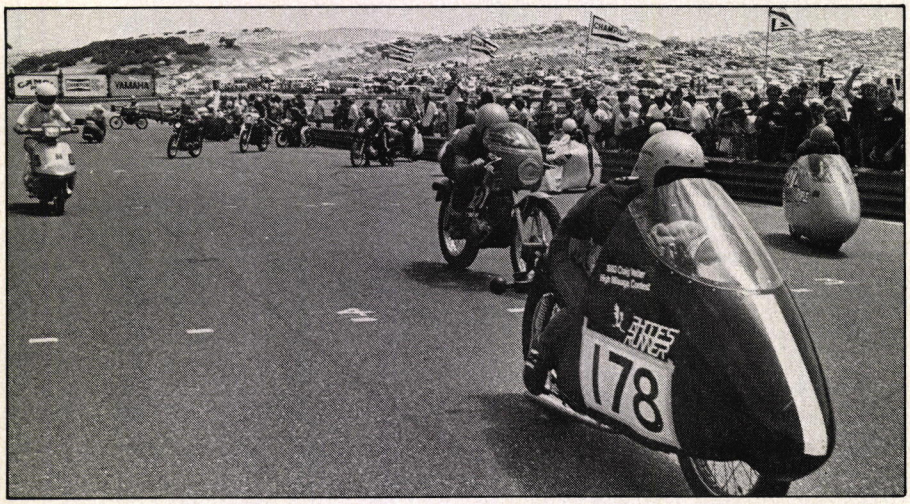

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• Racing is to economy what nuclear war is to landscaping. Nowhere in the racer's handbook will you find any mention of fuel conservation, 3000-rpm redlines or four-ounce fuel capacities. Nowhere, that is, unless the handbook happens to belong to a Nickel Racer.

The Nickel Racers came to Laguna Seca this year as finalists in Craig Vetter's annual fuel economy run. Having qualified the day before in a 66-mile run along the Big Sur coast, the MPG-racers were there to see who could go *farthest*, not *fastest* on five cents worth of gasoline. And while speed might not have been the top priority, the sense of competition was keen, indeed, owing to the $3000 top prize.

American Honda was represented, after having suffered defeats in Vetter's last two rallies. The wind-slick SL125-powered streamliner featured a redesigned canopy this year, beneath which famed dragracer Russ Collins manned the controls. Suzuki's semi-factory-supported GN125, built and piloted by Matt Guzzetta, returned, as did Dan Hanebrink with his 130-pound slipper, powered by a Honda 90. Hanebrink's bike had shared the fate of American Honda's entry last year—both had been toppled on Highway One by the strong coastal winds—and he was out to redeem himself.

And everyone was gunning for the defending champ, Charly Perethian, who had slightly revised his Team Rifle Yamaha 185.

As it developed, the sleeper of Saturday's qualifying run for the "race" on Sunday turned out to be the Blithe Special, Eric Blickenstaff's privately entered Honda CB100. Blickenstaff, along with partner Rick Montanaro, figured that weight, as much as aerodynamics, play a role in mpg, and their little Honda was enclosed in aluminum tubing and a lightweight Dacron skin. But on Saturday's qualifying run, Blickenstaff felt the effects of being cramped inside his tiny vessel, and had to take about two minutes to stretch his legs and arms during the brief hiatus after the first 33-mile heat. On the return run, the Blithe Special was slowed by an even slower moving van heading north on Highway One (the qualifying course is on a public highway) and fell two minutes behind schedule. His mileage figure—429 mpg—was the best of the bunch, but the rules stated that all bikes had to check in within a prescribed time span, and so the Blithe Special was scratched from Sunday's program at Laguna Seca.

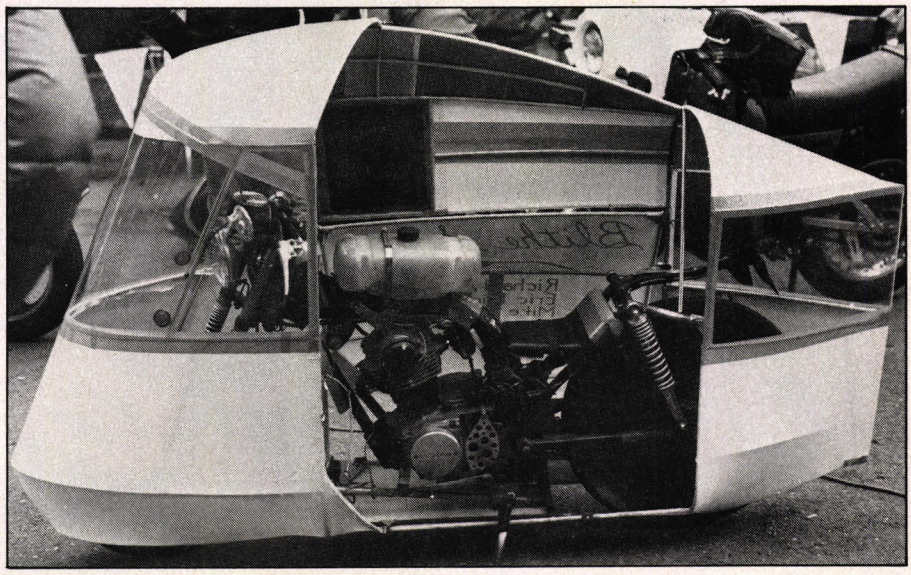
"Well," Blickenstaff said later about his two-minute break, "everyone was playing by the same rules. I just figure it came out to $1500 a minute."

Russ Collins kept the Honda upright this year, but a glitched carburetor spat fuel on his legs, causing him to finish late and with a 172-mpg average. Perethian, on time, topped the nickel-race-qualifiers with 382 mpg, just ahead of Hanebrink's 362. Lisa Lucke was third at 255 on a Honda 185, then Guzzetta's Suzuki squeezed in at 252. Fifth finisher was Matsu Matsuzawa, on a 185 from Honda Research. The stage was set for Sunday's nickel showdown.

High noon on the Laguna Seca grid: The Formula 1 racers were busy changing tires and preparing for their second 33-lap heat; the nickel racers lined the pit wall, poised for a Le Mans start. The stands fell hushed, each bike was filled with four ounces of fuel.

And they were off! Clutches slipped madly as the mini-misers wiggled, wobbled and graunched their way around the track. As the laps *slowly* ticked by, one by one the entrants burped to a standstill, until there were only four: The Rifle, Hanebrink's Special, Matsuzawa's Honda, and the Blithe Special (on the track but not in contention for the money prize). A lap later, only the latter two came around; another lap and it was Matsuzawa, alone into the Corkscrew at the top of the hill and coasting down through Turn Nine, slowly up the straight where it finally came to a stop just before the Datsun Bridge.

The crowd cheered. Whatta race! But wait a minute. Matsuzawa, not proficient in English, hadn't understood that all entrants were to drain their float bowls before attaching the nickel bottle. So with that sorted out, Perethian was declared the winner. Team Hanebrink was second, and Guzzetta third. Perethian had squeezed off another round with his Rifle.—*T.J. Rafferty*



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This year's sleeper turned out to be the Blithe Special

It succumbed to an age-old racing dilemma: too much time in the pits.

Pit Bits

• Superweekend: There'll be plenty of racing in the San Diego area the weekend of November 5–6. Saturday night will be the Miller High Life Beer Supercross at Jack Murphy Stadium, while the ABC Superbikers restage the

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David Bailey, Honda's supercross ace

Geared for San Diego's superweekend.

annual showdown of the world's best at Carlsbad Raceway on Sunday.

• South of the border: During that same San Diego superweekend, the SCORE Baja 1000 is slated to be run in Mexico.

• Motocross 1984: While the 1983 AMA professional motocross season doesn't conclude until the San Diego event, work already has begun for the 1984 season. The AMA announced that all 1984 Supercross purses will be increased by 63 percent, with a minimum pay-out of $35,000 per indoor event. Also, the AMA will tighten up its Wrangler Super Series schedule by limiting the number of Supercross events to 15 while sanctioning only 10 outdoor Nationals and two Grands Prix.

• Rumor: Alan Carter, who at 18 years old is the youngest man ever to win a roadrace GP, is scheduled to try out for the Yamaha factory team this winter. Adding grist to that rumor is the fact that Kenny Roberts has been semi-tutoring Carter this past season, and Yamaha is desperate to find a successor to the Grand Prix throne.

• Roberts on retirement: When pressed for an answer about his anticipated re-

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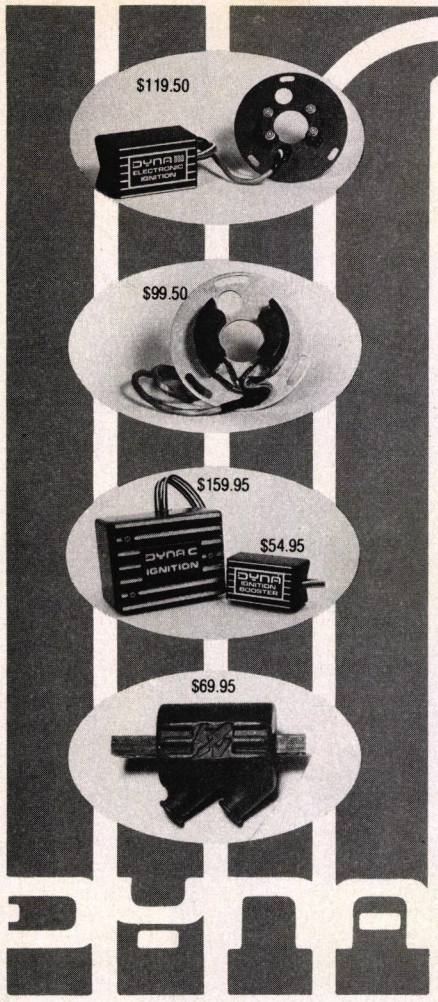

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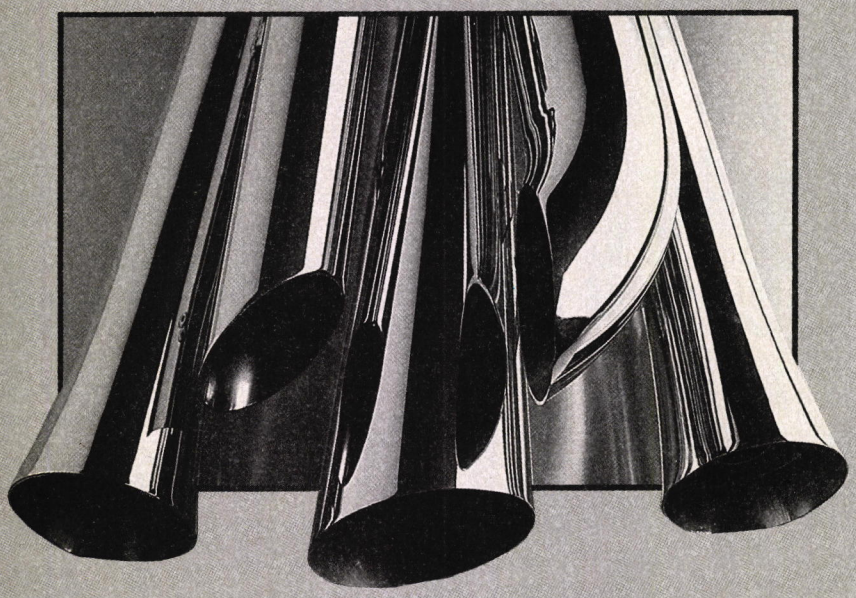

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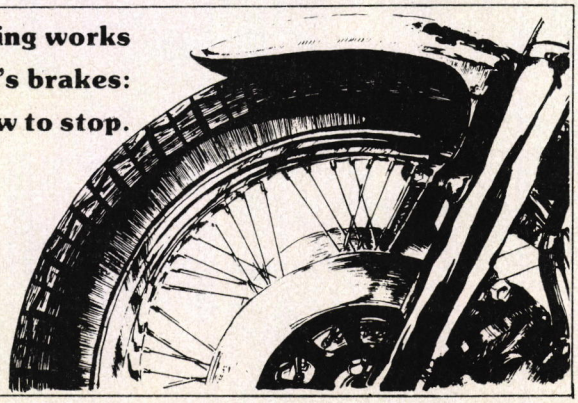

AMA

American Motorcyclist Association,
P.O. Box 141, Westerville, Ohio 43081

Pit Bits

tirement following this season, Roberts stated only that, "We'll just have to wait and see." One thing's for certain, though: Roberts knows that from here on out, it will only get tougher for him to win 500cc world championship GPs. The reason, said his mechanic Nobby Clark, is that the Honda (in any configuration) and Freddie Spencer (ditto) will be much improved for next year—and that much harder to beat.

• Sign of the times: Still, people want King Kenny to race on for at least *one more year*. And a sign at the Assen TT last June said exactly that, reading: "Fast Freddie—Faster Kenny: Just one more year, please Kenny."

• Olympic wrestler: While Roberts might retire next year from roadracing, he could qualify for the United States Olympic Team. His sport: Wrestling. It seems that the big vee-four Yamaha is a handful through tight turns, forcing KR to manhandle it to each apex. By the end of a race King Kenny's arms and shoulders are so swollen that ice packs are put on them to relieve the pain.

• White on green: Jim White, riding a factory-support Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate three-wheeler, won the ATV Open class in the Mickey Thompson Off-Road Grand Prix championship this year. White, a semi-privateer with limited help from the Kawasaki factory and sponsorship from Bassani Manufacturing, beat the Honda factory three-wheelers in the six-race series.

• Goss's gross: Randy Goss was the high-point rider in the Camel Pro Series at the season's halfway mark, and picked up $10,000 in the process. Goss, who won the championship in 1980, has not won a race the entire first half of this season. But there's no AMA rule that says you can't win the championship without winning a race, so Goss gladly accepted the half-season purse "My wife had a baby girl two months ago, so the money will really come in handy," he said after the halfway payday.

• Remorse: Still, Goss had this to say about not yet winning a race: "That bothers me, . . . that's what we set out to do every week."

• And now a word from his teammate: On the other hand, Goss's Harley-Davidson teammate, Jay Springsteen, has won more races than any other rider during the first half of the season. But he's third in the points standings, and had *this* to say: "I'd like to win some more nationals, but the most important thing is to get back my No. 1 plate. I haven't been the Camel Pro Series champion since 1978, and it means a lot

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Jay Springsteen anticipating a win

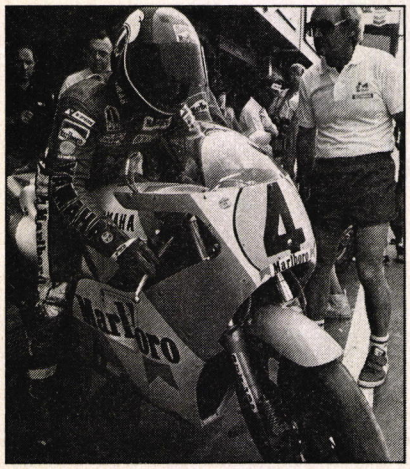
Another championship will excite him.

to me to get back the title." Stay tuned.

• The right stuff: And what does it take to win, or at least stay competitive these days in a Camel Pro Series race? Hank Scott explains it this way: "If I have a fast, good-handling bike, I ride it as hard as I can. If the bike is short on power and doesn't handle, I ride it even harder."

• Hard starting: Kenny Roberts, who has spent about as much track time this year pushing his Yamaha OW70 to get it started as he has racing it, attributed the bike's reluctance to start to the engine's long intake tract. The tunnels from the carburetors to the intake ports, he pointed out, are too long and it takes several steps of hard pushing to get the vee-four perked to life. He claims the factory engineers solved the problem during the annual Laguna Seca break.

—Dain Gingerelli



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Kenny Roberts and the stubborn Yamaha

He pushed hard to make it better.

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Winners & Losers:

Wayne Rainey Wins—and Ties

A new Superbike season begins after Laguna Seca.

• Even though Wayne Rainey and his Kawasaki GPz750 sat on the pole for the Laguna Seca Superbike race, the odds were slim that he'd win. Surrounding him on the grid were half a dozen factory-backed Honda Interceptor-mounted riders, led by Mike Baldwin.

Rainey stood alone in the Kawasaki camp, since teammate Wes Cooley had fallen off his Formula-1 bike in practice on Thursday, and had suffered a broken elbow in the crash. To make Rainey's chances even more remote, he, too, had fallen during Friday's practice, dropping his No. 1 bike when the front tire washed out in Turn Eight, a tricky downhill righthander. The backup bike was pressed into service; that was all the help he got.

But when the green flag dropped, Rainey forgot all that, and powered into the lead. And by winning the dragrace up the hill, Kawasaki proved it knew how to pull as much horsepower out of

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For most of the 26 laps, Mike Baldwin shadowed Wayne Rainey's GPz750

He patiently waited for a mistake that never came.

Continued

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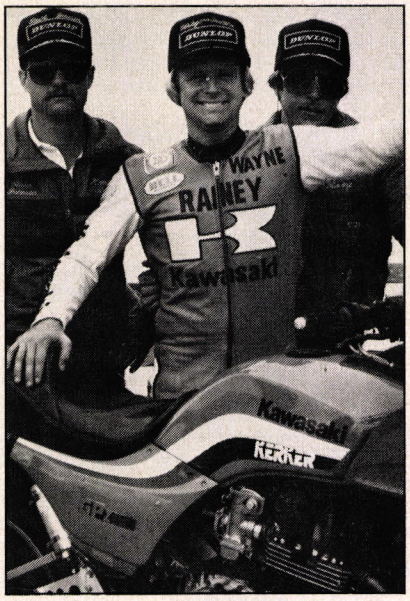
four cylinders as did Honda. Baldwin shadowed Rainey for a lap, finally passing him in the back section on Lap Two. Then they swapped positions for the next several laps. "We were just feeling each other out the first few laps," Rainey said after the race.

Baldwin continued to "feel him out," even nudging Rainey in Turn Nine. But Rainey was ready, and slid his GPz into the turn first: "It was like the old dirttrack days. I was ready to get closer if he wanted to," Rainey said. Baldwin wasn't, and Rainey stayed in the lead for the rest of the 26-lap race, with Honda factory-support rider Fred Merkel finishing in third position.

When Rainey crossed the finish line, only a few bike lengths ahead of Baldwin's Honda, it was his second win in a row, but only the first time this year he'd outraced Baldwin. Baldwin was at a slight disadvantage, though; his wrists still hurt from a crash at Pocono, and he had trouble braking for the turns. He even said that his hands had slipped off the handgrips once. A sure second-place was better than a DNF, so Baldwin was content to leave Laguna Seca in a tie with Rainey, each with 112 points toward the Superbike championship.

It's been a long road for Kawasaki this season, one that began in Honda's exhaust fumes at Daytona. An important factor in Kawasaki's resurgence is that its the racebikes are no longer prepared in Japan. The factory had taken the Superbike toys from Rob Muzzi's Santa Ana, California shop last winter. But due to logistical problems, Kawasaki returned the responsibility to the American shop after Talledega. This means that once again the man with the golden wrenches, Rob Muzzi, has full reign on how the power is put into the cylinders. And that's all to the good, according to



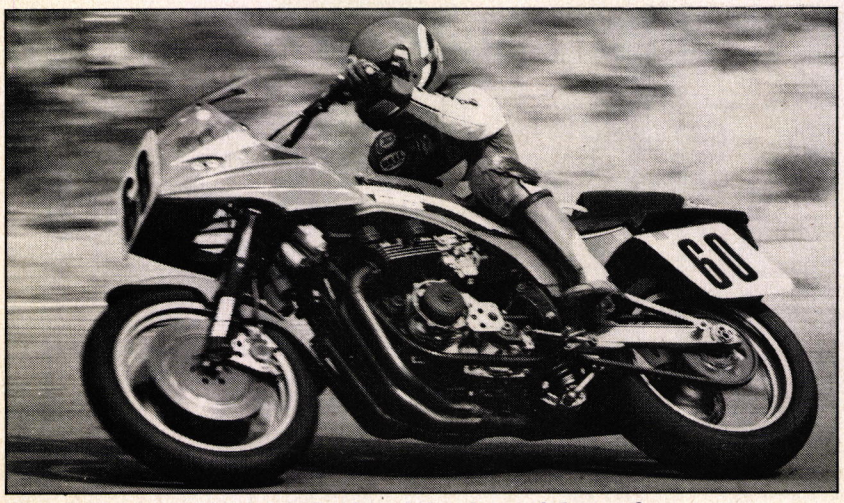
Rainey with the men responsible

Gary Mathers: "The crew is good."

Kawasaki team manager Gary Mathers. "Rob's great, and the rest of the crew is just as good," Mathers said.

But perhaps the pivotal factor in Kawasaki's turnaround this year is the riding of Rainey and Cooley. They've ridden slower bikes than their competition has, and still put them into victory circle. In the process, Rainey has boosted Kawasaki back to the head of the Superbike class, a position the company has enjoyed for the past two years, thanks to the talents of Eddie Lawson.

Now it's Rainey's turn to lead the Kawasaki charge. After his Laguna Seca win, he was confident about the upcoming Portland Superbike race. "Rain or shine, we're ready," Rainey said. And rain or shine, it'll be Rainey conditions for Honda in Superbike racing from here on out. —*Dain Gingerelli*



Kawasaki found enough power in the air-cooled engine to win Laguna Seca

In the process, the Green Machine rolled into a first-place tie with Honda.

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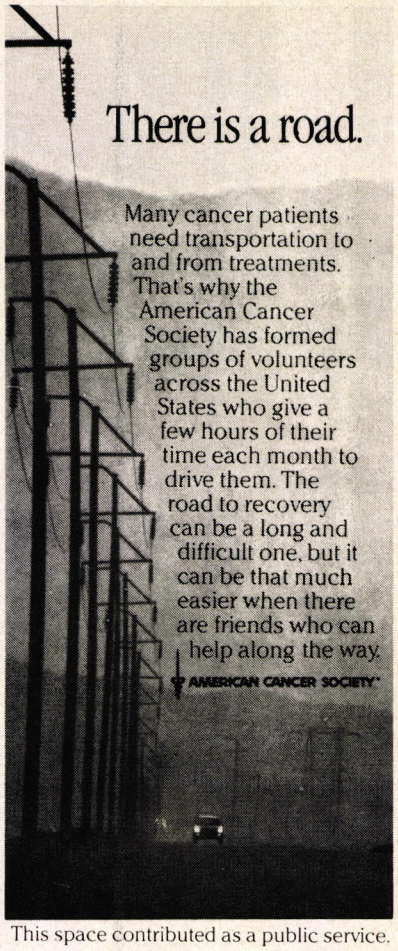
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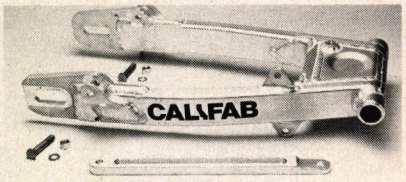

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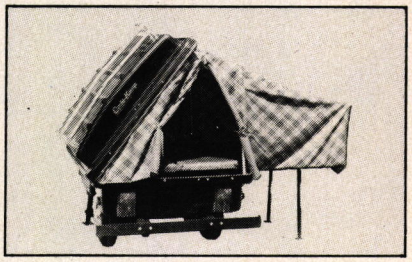

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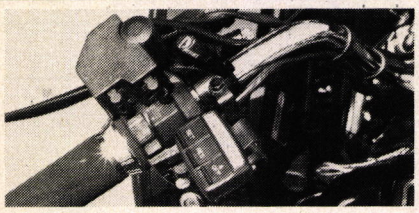

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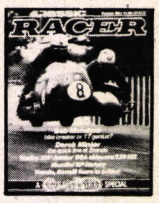

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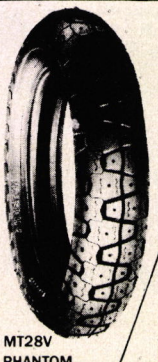

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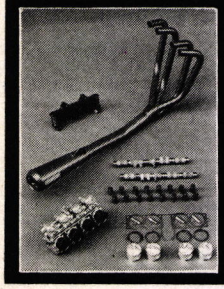

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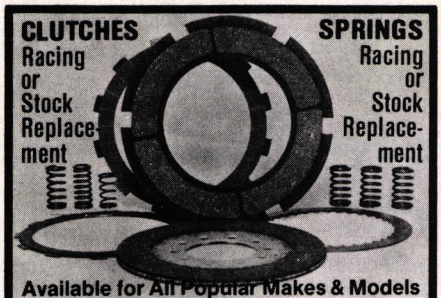

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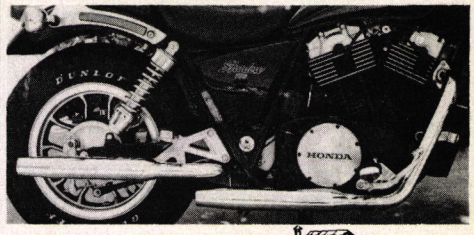

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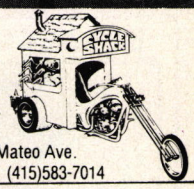

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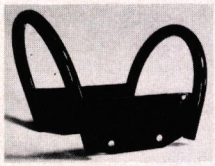

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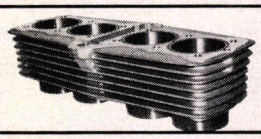

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LETTERS

Changing names, Picking winners and Reports to the Chairman.

CHANGE THE LOGO

I'm really getting sick of your magazine. What percentage of your company does Honda own? Whenever there's an article on a Honda (which is all the time) you guys blow it all out of proportion. The turbo comparison in the March '83 issue is a perfect example. In that article Honda got a full write-up, Suzuki slightly less and Yamaha squat. Everyone on the staff went out of their way to pat Honda's CX650 Turbo on the back. It looks to me as if your test riders, just like the magazine's owner, are paid off by Honda. So why don't you guys just get it over with and change your name to HONDA GUIDE?

By the way, there's no need to send me a subscription renewal; a year was too much. And I've already thrown my last issue in the trash.

Clint Engle
Council Bluffs, Iowa

That's probably just as well, Engle. Our magazine is for people who can read—ed.

HEAVY ON HONDAS

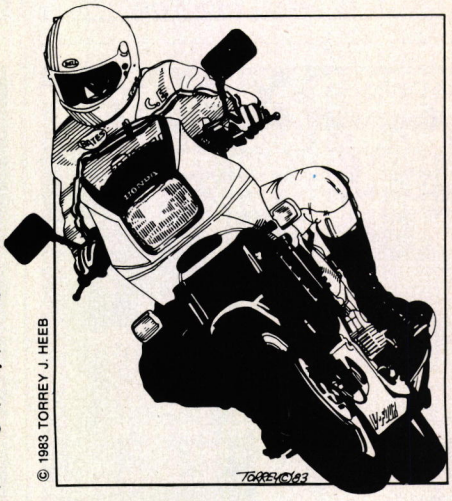
In regards to your Silver Bullet award: Of the nine bikes picked, six were Hondas, one was a Yamaha, one a Can-Am and one a Harley-Davidson. I have two questions: 1/ How many Honda representatives were there when you made your picks? 2/ Do they sell Kawasakis and Suzukis in California?

D. White
Milan, Michigan

We have two answers for you: 1/ None (see above); 2/ You bet they do, and most of them are better than a Shadow—read the article, White—ed.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

I don't know where you got some of those "winners" for your Silver Bullet award. Starting from the top, the CB1100F is a definition of mediocrity. With long-time scorchers like the GPz and GS1100 around, I don't understand how you could choose a newcomer solely on price. (Maybe a little "tip" from Honda-the-almighty?) The Yamaha Royale was a good choice, though; finally an alternative to the ugly, Aspençade-clone army. Next, I think any Harley is out, based on what that company did to the American consumer. As for the CR250R, okay, I'll agree this is Honda's year for motocross. But the V65 and the Nighthawk are typical Hondas and you wasted color pages even mentioning



these cruisers. But three cheers for the underdog; the Can-Am Sonic is an original and entertaining alternative. And now for some real laughs—the Honda Shadow. I cringe just looking at this bike. Finally, as much as I hate to admit it, the Interceptor seems to be *the* hot setup for '83. Whoopee for Honda.

Now, thanks for not even mentioning the entire GPz series, the KDX series, *any* European bike or any of the so many other models that made 1983 a mega-year for motorcycles.

Tim DiChiara
Stamford, Connecticut

Read the story. Which one of your choices changed the course of motorcycling?—ed.

TRASHY TASTE

Your Bike of the Year list was the best example of objective journalism I've seen in some time. I think your choices were accurate but, more than that, they were a tribute to American bad taste. Some of the bikes you picked were pure trash, probably bought by people who will sell them in three years—with less than 5000 miles on the odometer. But, I guess these are the people who pay the freight so the rest of us can get bikes like the Interceptor. Bottom Line: The System works.

Hank Daniels
New Cumberland, Pennsylvania

SHOP MANUAL

Your magazine rapidly is becoming the best light reading around. You must aim your copy at the air-heads of America; the contents are basic and road-test oriented, appealing only to new riders. How about some substance? I refer to

"Motorrad" and/or "Mechanics," from Germany and England, respectively. As an old phart, I need more in-depth information.

Jon Schwartz
Seattle, Washington

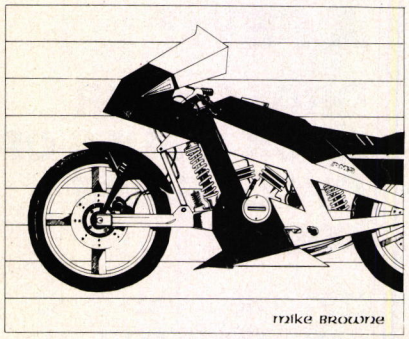
Our tests, Schwartz, are aimed at positioning and evaluating a bike—not at rebuilding it—ed.

CART BEFORE THE HORSE

In the comparative data section of the August '83 test on Suzuki's GS750E, you list some information on the '83 Honda Sabre. Being an owner of a Sabre, I have been waiting for a test on the '83 model. Did I miss your test? I'm interested because the '83 model seems to be slightly faster than my '82 and I'd like to know what changes brought this about?

Mike Campagna
Buffalo, New York

The changes were detailed in the September issue's test of the '83 Sabre. Performance testing of that bike was completed early enough to include in August's Comparative Test Data for the GS750E—ed.



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The bike of the future is here—simple in design, capable of performing well almost anywhere. An ultra-light 750 that can do it in the dirt, on the street or on the Superslab. The Honda XLV750R might turn out to be the wave of the future. As bikes become more and more specialized, and more expensive to own and operate, it makes sense to have one bike that can do it all, rather than four different bikes to handle all the same chores that the XLV could. If I could own only one bike, this one would be it.

Gerald Silvernale
Spokane, Washington

If you could own only one bike and this is it, might we refer you to "Smuggler's Handbook" in the September issue?—ed.

PRICE BEATER?

I've been reading your magazine for some time, paying close attention to the Letters column. Often, I read complaints about high prices for bikes and accessories. To make you feel better, I thought I'd tell you how things are in New Zealand. My CB1100F, bought in December of '82, cost me $7600. It gets worse; a GPz1100 goes for about $9000 and a Pirelli Phantom tire retails for $185. Incidently, gasoline is $3.20 per gallon.

M. Van De Water
Auckland, New Zealand

Funny, this sounds a lot like another complaint about prices—ed.

PAY THE PRICE?

Your June Editorial on the Harley-Davidson/ITC scandal is the only true, no-holds-barred statement on the subject that I've seen in *any* of the motorcycle magazines. Harley-Davidson is in the position it's in because of the low-quality motorcycles it makes, period. Price and Japanese competition have nothing at all to do with it.

By the way, I notice that Harley-Davidson doesn't buy any advertising space in your magazine. Is that the price you have to pay for honesty?

Lawrence Marquis
Tucson, Arizona

Apparently. But that didn't stop us from giving Vaughan Beals editorial space to make his case—ed.

BOOS FOR BEALS

Any more guest editorials by Vaughan Beals and you can cancel my subscription. He is, without a doubt, the typical CEO of an American industry. His time should be spent trying to point Harley-Davidson in the right direction, rather than snowing the American public.

Ted Blanchette
Versailles, Connecticut

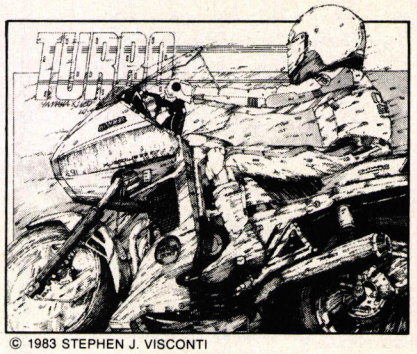
WHERE'S THE PROOF

Vaughan Beal's Guest Editorial only adequately argued that Harley-Davidson faces competition from the Japanese. But he doesn't support the need for, or the implementation of, the tariff. In fact, by stating that Harley has made "enormous progress" in revitalization he effectively argues *against* a tariff. And Beals can only assume that all four Japanese companies are conspiring to flood the American market and put Harley out of business. He has no proof that the current motorcycle backlog is anything more than the result of misjudging the market.

Brian J. Withnell
Glen Burnie, Maryland

AND IN THIS CORNER

I think it's about time that we Americans started thinking about ourselves



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and quit worrying about what another country might think of our policies. I've been all over this world and one thing I've noticed is that the further east you get, the more apparent it becomes that government is used to protect industry. Just try to buy a Harley-Davidson, or *any* American product for that matter, in Japan and you'll see how strongly the Japanese believe in free trade.

Richard D. Perdue
Fort Walton Beach, Florida

ROCKY IV

Vaughan Beals brings a lot of facts to light, like the Japanese manipulation of the free trade market to overwhelm any other manufacturer with sheer numbers and false pricing. Long live Harley-Davidson and all fighters.

William Hastings
Grants Pass, Oregon

LSR TOURING

During the past years, CYCLE GUIDE has played a part in the decision-making process of almost every motorcycle purchase I have made. So when I decided to look for a new superbike, one of the first moves I made was to turn to CYCLE GUIDE's Cycle Guide.

Now, I have been rolling all sorts of alternatives around in my mind. How about a GPz1100, or a V45 Interceptor, or maybe even a turbo? But CYCLE GUIDE has shown me the fallacy of my thinking. The GL1100 Aspencade is obviously the king of the superbikes. I can see it now. There I am on my new GL, topped out at 152 mph, while the GPz (or CB or GS or whatever) guys are laying on the gas tank, running WFO and watching me disappear into the distance. At least that's what it says in the CYCLE GUIDE/Cycle Guide top-speed column—152 mph. (No brag, just fact.) And I know you guys would never dream of trying to palm off redline in top gear as a machine's top speed.

David Carleton
Winter Haven, Florida

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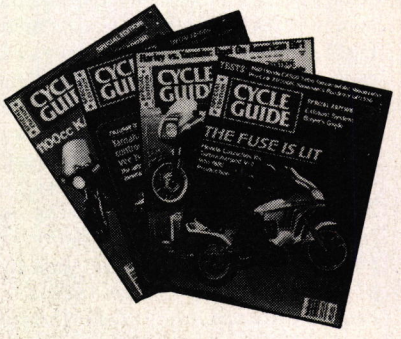

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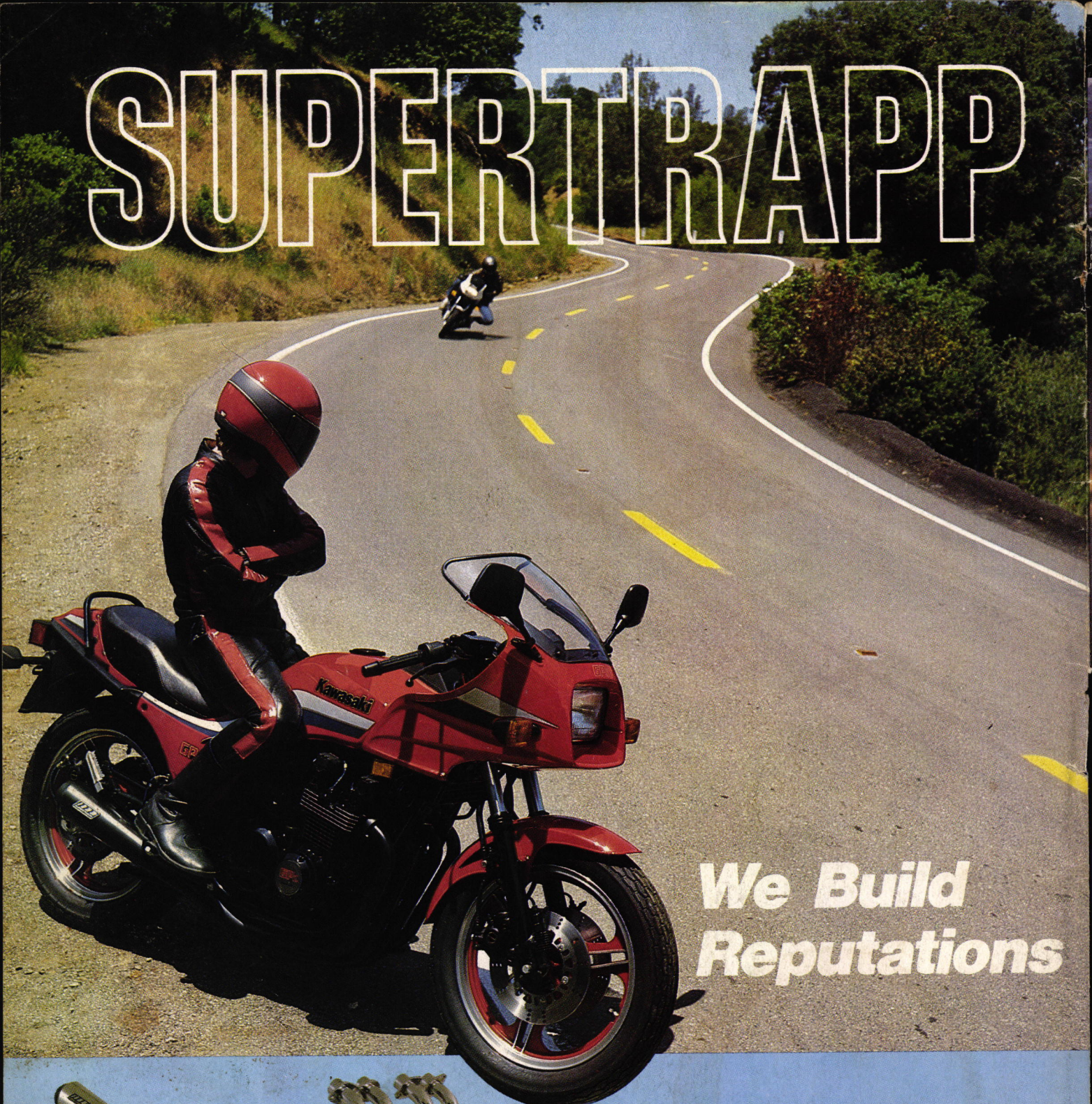

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